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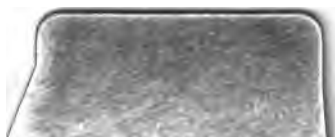
# MASTER AND MAN



S. J. FITZGERALD.



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*MASTER AND MAN.*









‘Walking slowly up and down the smooth walk, with his hands clasped behind him, is to be seen the rector.’—P. 7.

# MASTER AND MAN:

*A TALE FROM REAL LIFE.*

By S. J. FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF 'THE LANCASTERS AND THEIR FRIENDS,' 'EQUALLY YOKED,'  
'COALS AND COLLIERIES,' ETC.



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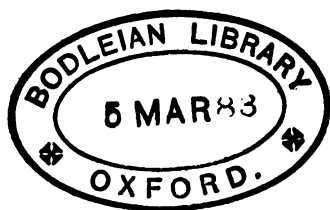
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1882.

251. g. 631.



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE RECTORY.

Beside the dewy border let me sit,  
All in the freshness of the humid air :  
There, in that hollowed rock, grotesque and wild,  
An ample chair, moss-lined, and overhead  
By flowering umbrage shaded, where the bee  
Strays diligent, and with the extracted balm  
Of fragrant woodbine loads his little thigh.

THOMSON'S *Seasons*.

IN one of the many beautiful corners to be found in Shropshire stood a low, old-fashioned house, with curious chimney-stacks and square windows. These same windows were divided by stone mullions. The small diamond panes were of a greenish colour, and were held together by the well-known leaden bands of ancient date. The doors, as well as all the original wood-work employed in the construction of the building, were of oak—strong as iron, and made nearly black by the hand of time. The interior of the fine old place, with its thick walls, high chimney-pieces and low fire-grates, old ‘banisters’ and wide staircases, need not claim our attention.

A few rooms only will present themselves to us, as we proceed with our story. One of them was cosily fur-

nished and brightened, as rooms can be by the hands of women of taste, with flowers, pictures, and the various 'odds and ends' that together make a pretty room. There were pamphlets and newspapers, pens, ink, and a paper-knife; drawing materials, too, on a small table by themselves, not in use at present, but ready to be taken up at any time. There was, too, that without which any room (that is intended to live in, and is not kept for mere show) is incomplete—a lady's work-basket. Some dainty work had just been laid down, and the chair appeared to have just been pushed from before the table where the work-basket was located. There were evidences of the frequent visits of a gentleman to this room, as well as those of a lady. A pair of slippers lay on the hearth-rug, a loose reading-coat was thrown lightly over the back of a large easy-chair, and on the floor by the side of it lay a volume of Sermons by Archbishop Tillotson. It is a nice room, just the room to read or rest in. There is a passage that leads to another—a dark-panelled room with a shining oak floor. That is known as 'the study,' sometimes as 'the library,' for it is both, as we shall see.

To return to the outside of the old house: a verandah sloped away from the main building, and was supported by oaken pillars of gnarled and grotesque shape. Up these pillars and over the trellis-work ran creeping plants of great beauty. Lavish of their perfume were the rose and honeysuckle. The jessamine and clematis threw their clinging tendrils high, their star-like blossoms showing in beautiful relief against the dark green foliage. At one end of the building grew the thick,

healthy stem from which ran, up the entire wall, and over one of the old chimneys, the ivy that was the admiration of all, giving, as it did, a never-failing rest to the tired eye, and a luxurious cover to the blank wall; as well as to the feathered songsters of the garden

— a harbour of delight

For wren and redbreast, where they sit and sing  
Their slender ditties when the other trees are bare.

The gardens belonging to the old house were, as may be imagined, well sheltered. Large trees of holly and laurel, with other handsome and hardy trees, grew in exposed places, sheltering the more delicate of nature's fair children from the rude winds. A rough stone seat—now, like the house, taken in the embrace of the friendly ivy—had been placed under a large drooping willow in such position as to command a view of the flower-garden, where, in their season, blossomed the modest snowdrop, the yellow primrose, the flaunting tulip, the blushing rose, the lofty dahlia, and the fair lily—just as the almighty wisdom of God designed them to do. O that He who bade those of old 'consider the lilies' would help all, both young and old, to think of the marvellously beautiful things we call flowers, and to remember by Whom and for whom they were made! By Whom?

There's not a tint that paints the rose,  
Or decks the lily fair,  
Or streaks the humblest flower that grows,  
But God hath placed it there.

For whom?



To comfort man—to whisper hope,  
Whene'er his faith is dim ;  
For Whoso careth for the flower,  
Will much more care for him.

Thank God, then, for the flowers, since they, with the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the host of heaven, are equally the work of His bountiful hand.

A not unmusical voice comes across the flower-beds : the owner seems to be communing with the Creator of all the beauty that surrounds him. He is a plain man, with a closely shaven face, in whose every feature there seems to be peace ; so calm, even dignified, is his manner that, were he not dressed in fustian, and engaged in manual labour, he might very easily be taken for the 'master' of this story, whereas it is only John Carr, the 'man.' John sings as he works. Commend me to the man who does it, be he delver or be he duke. Turning over the soil with his spade, he sings :

' Fearless of hell and ghastly death,  
I'll break through every foe :  
The wings of love and arms of faith  
Will bear me conqueror through.

I know it. Blessed be Thy holy name. " Never leave thee, nor forsake thee," were the words that fell in disjointed sentences from the man's lips. Then he again commenced singing :

' The great Captain I have chose  
Never did a battle lose.'

John Carr did not at this time dream of the battle that lay before him, and the great need there would be

for his Lord to be with him to keep him, lest the conflict should prove too strong. But he felt his need of Him in the smaller things of life, and so kept close to his Master's side. No; he did not dream of the sorrow that was even now looming in the future. It was well for John—as, indeed, it is for us all—that God keeps futurity hidden from our sight. So John attended to his master's flowers and fruit, as well as to the many other duties that devolved upon him as head 'man,' in the fear of the Lord. It is, perhaps, a breach of etiquette to introduce the 'man' before the 'master;' but John is so associated with the gardens as to be almost a part of them. He was one of those who, in the fear of the Lord, make their employer's interests their own. The rector knew it, and prized him accordingly. We shall see more of John shortly, and hope to be able to show that he merited the good opinion his master had of him.

The building that has been described is the abode of the Reverend Richard Clement. It is called The Rednall Rectory. The grounds, as well as the house, are considered to be very beautiful, but not too much so for the worthy clergyman, who, in virtue of his office as the rector of the parish of Rednall, dwells therein with his excellent daughter, Rose.

One other child, a boy, had been left to the rector when his beloved wife died. This son had grown up a clever and accomplished scholar. In his eighteenth year he had entered one of the colleges in the University of Cambridge as a gentleman commoner. Hubert—that being the youth's name—was entitled to extensive

property under the will of a certain aunt Janet, on the maternal side of the family, and would, at the age of twenty-one, become the possessor of what was known as the Drowich estates. As the owner of this property, the rector judged that his son ought to have all the advantages education and travel could give him; so willingly denied himself of many things in order to place in the hands of Hubert such funds as he hoped and, at that time, believed would, with perhaps some very trifling exceptions, see him fairly through his years and ready to take his B.A. degree. In all this, alas! there was bitter disappointment, and poor old aunt Janet's property might as well have been swept into the sea as have been bequeathed to Hubert Clement. It might have been better—would have been—if Hubert had been taught to dig potatoes, make shoes, or measure calico in a shop, rather than have inherited the Drowich estates. If he had been, as was his father in his early life, poor, and so compelled to work, he might have been a splendid man; but, as he grew up and began to see the luxurious idleness of his companions, their expensive pleasures and habits, he fell into the same snares—snares and pitfalls from which such men rarely escape.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE REVEREND RICHARD CLEMENT.

He is a noble gentleman withal,  
Happy in his endeavours; the gen'ral voice  
Sounds him for courtesy, behaviour, language,  
And every fair demeanour, an example;  
Titles of honour add not to his worth,  
Who is himself an honour to his title.

J. FORD.

**W**ALKING slowly up and down the smooth walk, with his hands clasped behind him, is to be seen the rector, a tall and rather stout gentleman, who has, in his younger days, been very handsome. The beauty of youth, however, as well as that of early manhood, has given place to the calm, benevolent, almost holy appearance that we sometimes see on the faces of the good. His eyes are dark and piercing, and his sight is not dim, though he is over fifty years of age. An ample beard, white as snow, falls low on his chest. Dressed in black cloth, with a long, loose coat of the same dark material, he looks exactly what he is—a sober Christian gentleman. There is a grave look on his face, as he slowly turns at the end of the walk, and he heaves a deep sigh. It is the anniversary of the death of his beloved wife, his sweet Ruth, who has been called from him early in life, and whose loss, though he bowed to the will of God

in patience, he has never ceased to deplore; for none can understand, except those who pass through the same deep waters, the anguish that will thrust itself on the widowed heart.

She had been young, fair, and good. Not too young, though; for

They reckon not by days or months  
Where she had gone to dwell.

Not too fair for

A land whose light is never dimmed by shade,  
Whose fields are ever vernal;  
Where nothing beautiful can ever fade,  
But blooms for aye, eternal.

Not too good for the beautiful land, or its glorious King,  
of Whom we sing:

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in power, in love, and purity!

The good man knew all this perfectly. He had seen into the heart of his young wife during the months of her illness; and as he sat holding the thin hands, and gazing on the dear face that was so soon to be hidden from his sight, he felt that, even in her extreme weakness, she was his true 'helpmeet,' for she drew him nearer to God. They would speak together of heaven and heavenly things; she, of her departure. In this, however, he could not join.

'It will not be long, Richard,' she said, as he sat with his hands over his eyes; 'it will be only a little while

until we are all at home. Speak to me, my husband; say you will be patient for this little while; say you will.'

'I will try, Ruth; I trust God may help me so to be.'

'He will, there is no doubt about it; and O, my own dear husband, if God permit me, I will be the very first to give you welcome to the home above. Do you think He will let me, Richard?'

'Yes, my wife, I think so,' and he kissed the white lips, feeling there was already more of heaven than earth even then about his beloved Ruth.

'Heaven is not so far off now, dear,' she continued, after a searching look into her husband's face. 'You won't be so far from me; you can see it nearer now, Richard?'

There is no answer from the sorrowful husband.

'Don't you see it, Richard? Don't you feel willing to let me go just for a little while before you?'

'No, Ruth; not quite; not yet, at least; but I am trying.'

He tried, and at last succeeded in saying, 'Thy will be done.'

'That is well,' she had told him, and, at the same time, had obtained from him a promise that he would hold her hand till the last breath was gone; and so he had done, going with her right up to the gates of the celestial city. From thence, with weary feet and aching heart, he had to retrace his steps and walk the rest of his pilgrimage alone—alone, so far as her tender ministrations and hopeful words were concerned. He went his

way, knowing more of God and having more sympathy with his fellow-creatures through the teachings of his lost wife; though, like all who strive to help and comfort others, he found it easier to give comfort than to apply it to his own heart. But the good rector, as he walked up and down the garden walk on this anniversary day, though sighing, said, in low tones, 'It is well, my Lord, Thou knowest best; Thou hast taken her from the evil to come.' To come? Yes! A cloud, as yet not much bigger than a man's hand, was on the horizon, that would gradually spread and cover the household and its faithful servants with sorrow, desolation, and woe.

The Reverend Richard Clement was loved and respected by his parishioners, though many of them were not accustomed to sit under his ministry, being 'Dissenters,' and having their own ministers and their own places of worship, as well as their own views of the methods of worship; but there were none that did not welcome him to their homes in times of sickness or sorrow. While he interfered with the private religious opinions of no man, he was the friend of all, and claimed as brethren all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, whatever their creed. As a matter of course, he considered he was in his right place as a clergyman of the Church of England; so, doubtless, he was believed to be by those who were attendants at the fine old church where he ministered. Possessing, as he did, those great advantages to a public man, or speaker of any description, a fine, clear voice and a commanding appearance, he drew a fair share of the population of Rednall. If a grave

dignity marked his ordinary actions, a more reverent manner sat upon him when he stood in the desk and repeated, rather than read, the prayers for the day. With closed eyes and clasped hands, he would entreat the mercy of God in the words of the Litany, 'By Thine agony and bloody sweat ; by Thy cross and passion ; by Thy precious death and burial ; by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension ; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost,' with fervour and faith, not in the affected, not to say ridiculous, manner of some of the preachers of the present day, or of those who believe it to be right to 'intone,' and so spoil the words that have given comfort to thousands when they have been uttered in fervent simplicity.

The rector, however, failed in his sermons ; they were too high in tone, too elaborate. To use the words of one of his congregation, they 'went over the heads of the people, instead of into their hearts.' It was not an unusual thing for some few to slip quietly out of church when the rector went to the vestry to put on the gown used in the pulpit, sadly to the annoyance of the old clerk, who himself invariably slept through the whole sermon, though, like all who fall asleep in church or chapel, he never owned to doing so indecorous a thing. The churchwardens expressed their disapprobation of the custom in some such terms as the following : 'If the rector preached long sermons, there might be an excuse ; but he never exceeds the time a minute. Nobody's dinner need be spoiled by waiting to hear the sermon. It's shabby.' The pompous old squire always sat it out, asleep or awake ; so did his kind-hearted old



wife ; but to the generality of the congregation the words of the Poet Laureate—

An' I niver knaw'd whot 'a mean'd, but I thowt 'a 'ad summut  
to saay ;

An' I thowt 'a said whot 'a owt to 'a said, an' I coom'd awaay—  
would have been the correct sentiments of their minds. The rector was a fine theologian, and could argue to a nicety on any point ; but he failed, because, with all his learning, he did not meet the simple wants of the people. He at times argued on points that had never come into the minds of the hearers, and, like Stephen Blackpool, they were compelled to say it was 'aw' a muddle.' If his Ruth had lived, she would have shown a more excellent way ; but, as it was, the path taken at the commencement of his career as a preacher was unaltered. Tender and kind in his own home, there is no wonder that both his children and servants loved him. His manner was specially kind to the old people of the parish, and the little children would leave their play to share in the good man's smile.

## CHAPTER III.

### ROSE.

O the rapturous height  
Of the holy delight  
Which I felt in the life-giving blood !  
Of my Saviour possess'd,  
I was perfectly blest,  
As if filled with the fulness of God.

CHARLES WESLEY.

**R**OSE, the rector's only daughter, 'the worthy daughter of a worthy sire,' was a tall and graceful girl of twenty-two ; not handsome, for she had not the regularity of feature that marks a beautiful face ; certainly not plain, for her face changed with every emotion of the mind, being pensive and grave, or bright and merry, without any effort on the girl's own part. Though young, Rose was a wise and sensible woman, who gave very little thought to her face, knowing that God looked not on the outward appearance, but on the heart. If, however, Rose's face gave her little trouble, her hair did. It was thick and heavy, of a deep black, and glossy as the raven's wing. She needed neither pad nor frissette to increase its bulk, nor 'loose tail,' nor elaborate 'plait,' as do so many ladies, young and old, with the mistaken idea that people believe it to be 'all their own ;' as it certainly is *not*, except by the 'right

of purchase.' Dame Nature is not always so lavish in dispensing her favours in this particular, as some of our fair friends would have us believe, and, as a rule, she endows us with hair of similar colour and texture.

This chapter, however, is not intended to be on hair, or on hair-dressing, other than that of Rose Clement's, and that but for a moment. I said it was a trouble to her. For some years she had allowed it to fall loosely down her back and over her shoulders; but as she grew older she felt that, as the rector's daughter, it was her duty to be a pattern of neatness and order to the young folk of the village. So, 'How shall I do this hair?' she asked herself. She tried it several ways: one made her look fast; another made her head look so large, that she laughed outright, though alone in her room. So she brushed it all back over the small ears, then, with both hands, gathered it together and twisted it into a loose knot, at the back of her shapely head, and so it remained.

'You look very nice and neat, dear,' her father said, as Rose poured out the coffee at breakfast.

'Do I, papa?' said she, with one of her beaming smiles.

'Yes! just like your mother when I saw her first.'

So Rose—'coal-black Rose,' her brother used to call her—continued to wear the troublesome hair coiled at the back of her head, little dreaming how much it became her, till she grew to like it, and thought she looked less like a Gipsy.

Rose loved her father with all her heart. She was at once his child, his friend, and housekeeper. Best of

all, she loved Jesus. Thoughtful above her years she had always been ; but when she gave her heart to God, it was a special time to her.

Sitting in the twilight together one evening, the father and daughter had a long conversation on heaven, its glories and its rest.

Mr. Clement remarked, 'Happy they who are living in a state of readiness for the abode of the blest. Is my little blossom,' he asked tenderly, 'is my little blossom ready to take her place in the home prepared for those who love the Lord ?'

The girl answered, 'I know I love Jesus, papa ; I know He loves me. I want to evidence this by giving my whole life to Him.'

'When did you first know this, my dear ?' the rector asked with emotion.

'It is two years since I first knew it, papa.'

'So long, and I not to know it, Rose !' said her father.

'You never asked me in so many words. I have often wanted to tell you, that you might be glad with me ; but I seemed to lack courage ; I am very glad to tell you now.'

'I am more than glad to hear, Rose. Tell me how it happened.'

'Yes ; you will remember the confirmation two years ago ? That was the day on which I received forgiveness of my sins.'

'But, Rose, my child, you surely do not—no, you have been taught differently—you do not think that the laying on of the bishop's hands had anything to do with

your salvation?' and he sought an answer in the dark eyes anxiously.

'No, no, dear papa; but I had thought much before that time. I knew that I ought to be other than I was, more like Christ. I felt that, with my many advantages, I ought to be doing something for Jesus. Then I had often heard you say that the first thing to do was to give myself to Him.'

'Yes, my love, that is the first step in taking upon yourself the vows and work of the Lord. Go on, Rose.'

'Then, papa, when we left the church on the day I mentioned, I went straight to my room, and, on my knees, I besought the Lord to take me and make me His very own for time and for eternity. I told the Redeemer all I felt and wished, and how I longed for pardon and adoption. I am certain God heard me, and gave me the desire of my heart, for a new and blessed feeling came to me. I seemed to be full of love to God and everybody. I understood then, as, I thank God, dear father, I do now, what it was to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Ever since that time I have been very anxious to do something in the Lord's cause, if I knew how.'

'The blessing of the Lord be upon you, my darling. He will accept your work, as He has already accepted you. We must think and talk this over. Have you any thought of what you can do. Has nothing been suggested to your mind?'

'I should like, if I am fit for it, to have a class of girls once a week to teach the Scriptures to, not simply

girls from amongst those we know to attend church and our own school, but any girls that would come.'

'Yes, Rose, that will be one thing. You can have my study for your class to meet in, and so you will be able to find anything you may require for reference without much trouble.'

'Thank you very much, papa; I shall try to profit by your kindness.'

'I think you had better see about the young folk at once, Rose. Your pet, Ella Carr, will be one, I know, and be very likely to mention the class to others. So, I am sure, will her father speak of your intention to the girls in his "society class;" for I agree with you that this attempt of yours should be quite unsectarian, not for any church or any creed.'

'No, dear papa, for Jesus, for Jesus only.'

In a very short time the rector's daughter had a number of young people about her as her scholars. She felt she must fit herself for the teacher's office in a double sense, not only in being filled with a love for the souls of her young friends, but to be able to place before them, in an intelligent manner, the great truths contained in Holy Writ. Rose was surprised at the amount of information she gained for herself in thus striving to benefit others. New facts, new histories, new poems, new promises appeared to Rose as she searched the Scriptures. With the valuable aid afforded by her father's library, she soon became a very efficient teacher; and Rose Clement had 'a mind to work.' She added to this present work a care for their future; for, when the girls left their homes to take situations in

shops or household service, as do girls of the class from whence Rose's scholars were taken, their young instructress never suffered them to go without words of prayer and warning, a copy of God's Word invariably being Rose's parting gift. 'Be sure you go to a Sabbath school,' she would say; 'and as soon as you do, write to me with your teacher's name and address, that I may communicate with her.' This was done with few exceptions, and gave Rose the opportunity she sought of creating an interest in the mind of the new teacher for her late scholar. This plan might be adopted with advantage by other teachers, thus securing a friend for the young girls who are thrown, some of them very young, in the midst of unsympathising strangers.

Methodist societies, by the admirable system of giving a 'removal note,' and the letter written by a minister or class-leader, place their members amongst friends at once; but all scholars are not members, and so have no introduction to pious friends, as a rule. This is, it is to be feared, how so many of the young people who leave our schools are lost to us. I commend Rose's plan to teachers, as *a part of their work for God*.

We must have one look at Rose in the library with her class, and listen to one lesson; but this must be reserved for another chapter.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ROSE AND HER CLASS.

It is the secret sympathy,  
The silver link, the silken tie,  
Which heart to heart and mind to mind,  
In body and in soul, can bind.—WALTER SCOTT.

SEE, then, Rose sits with her young friends in the oak-panelled study at the rectory. In this sombre room the shelves are filled with books far beyond the comprehension of scholar or teacher. Old worm-eaten volumes, ponderous black-letter tomes, bound in 'boards' literally, and tied together with leathern thongs; ancient copies of rare works, with iron clasps, with wonderful and grotesque figures woven into headings and tail-pieces to the various chapters; books of controversy, books on war, books on peace, books of theology, by dead and gone divines, whose fertile discourses, prepared often in extreme heaviness, and with an awful consciousness of the preacher's responsibility before God, are now seized by lazy young men, and 'ground down to modern use.'

To none of these, however, did Rose attempt to bring the attention of the girls after the first evening of their meeting together. Then she, in order to remove the nervous feeling which some of them might feel on being brought into the rector's study, took from their places these



treasures of learning and antiquity, conversing freely with them, as she pointed out the strange characters and get-up of the ancient volumes.

Rose wished to teach the Gospel and make it so plain that the youngest of her scholars should be able to understand its beautiful lessons. For this purpose, she encouraged the girls to ask questions on anything that was not clear to them. On this particular evening the lesson was on the words, 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' 'As we speak together this evening,' said the teacher, 'we shall see the strong reason there was for the Lord Jesus to point out the necessity that existed for heart holiness in place of the outward observances of the Pharisees, who, as I suppose you know, were extremely fond of ceremony.'

'Yes, Miss Rose,' said one of the girls, 'they were in the habit of wearing broad sashes with fringes and embroideries, and were fond of making long prayers in public places, so as to be seen of men, and to be thought very good, when they really were not good, but very worldly.'

'You are right, Anna. They loved the praise of men rather than the approval of God. The Lord Jesus, in the story of the Publican and the Pharisee, shows us exactly the opinion these people had of themselves. In reading up for this lesson, I came upon this passage in one of John Bunyan's writings. Listen while I read it to you: "What a fool's paradise was in the heart of this Pharisee, as he stood in the temple, saying, 'God! I thank Thee that I am not as other men; I am good and holy, for I am a righteous man. I am full of good

works, I am no extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer, nor even as this wretched publican. I have kept myself to the rule of mine own order; and my order is the most strict of all orders now in being. I fast, I pray, I give tithes of all I possess; yea, so forward am I to be a religious man, so ready to do my duty, that I asked both God and man the ordinances of justice and judgment. I take delight in thus approaching God. So what less can now be mine than the kingdom of heaven?" "Thus," says the same writer, "did this self-righteous man strut, and vapour, and swagger before God."

'Now,' Rose resumed, laying down the book from which she had read the passage above given, 'that is the opinion of a man who had been brought very low at the feet of his Lord, and he well understood that no pride could dwell in the heart of a penitent sinner. If, then, we consider Jesus saw into the hearts of these people, and knew that, with all their show, they were at heart hollow, deceitful, and oppressive, we do not wonder at the very strong words He uses in reference to them, do we?'

'No, Miss Rose, not at all.'

'Were there many of them, that Jesus so often speaks of them?' another inquired.

'Yes, their numbers were great. The Scribes and all the learned Rabbis, or doctors of the law, were of the persuasion, and the greater part of the people as well; so that, you see, they had to be met with words of wisdom and power.'

'What does the word "Pharisee" mean, please?'

‘It is derived from a Hebrew word meaning “to separate,” so that they may be called Separatists.’

‘Thank you,’ replied the girl; ‘but separate from what?’

‘I will try to tell you. About one hundred and forty years before the birth of Jesus, the Jewish Church was in a fallen state. The people seem to have given up the true worship of Jehovah, and were indifferent to the law that had been given by God to His servant Moses. Are you following me in what I am saying?’

‘Yes, we are going with you, Miss Rose.’

‘There were some of them, however, who began to think of the exceeding sinfulness of their state before God; and they determined to separate themselves from the general and prevailing state of backsliding, and form themselves into a sort of new society, that would restore the true worship and observe the laws laid down by God. That is, I believe, the origin of the sect, and also of the word Pharisee, or Separatist.’

‘Why, then,’ cried more than one, ‘they were not bad, rather good, we should think.’

Rose smiled as she answered: ‘Yes, good, without doubt, at the time; but during the years that had passed from the formation of the sect to the time of the sojourn of the Saviour here, they, too, had fallen into a state of backsliding. All the good resolves they commenced with had been lost, and the empty form of profession alone remained.’

‘Did they believe, as we do, in the Old Testament Scriptures?’

‘They did not take the whole of the Old Testament

books ; but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, and one or two others, they held to be inspired. And, unlike the Sadducees, they believed in the resurrection of the dead. Further, they held the doctrine of the transmigration of souls.'

'What do you mean by that, please?'

'I mean that they believed, if a person died, his soul entered into another body at once.'

'How very funny!' said one who had been listening attentively.

'Well, it is ; but I have not told you all about this strange faith. They thought that if a person was very wicked indeed, God would not let him go into another body, but would send him to the world of the lost, without the chance of being saved that he would have if his soul inhabited several different bodies. They also believed that all were predestinated to do certain things while in the world ; though that does not agree with the opinion I have just mentioned of men being permitted to enter into other bodies, that a chance might be afforded to them of being saved.'

'The Pharisees were very proud, I suppose, Miss Rose, and would not listen to Jesus, Who would soon have made them understand things aright, would He not?'

'Ah, yes, Ellen,' Rose answered. 'They were proud and intolerant ; their minds were narrow, their judgment was warped ; they did not understand the purity, the holy self-denial of the Son of God. His lowly condition in life was not pleasing to them ; that He, the supposed carpenter's son, should attempt to teach or

rebuke them, who considered themselves so holy, roused their hatred and anger. You see, they had never sought, and so, of course, had not received, from the hands of God a sight of their own condition before Him; they knew nothing of that holiness of heart without which no man can see God. No! they were the blind leaders of the blind; their eyes were closed to the beauty of Christ, closed by their pride; so they never saw Jesus as their Saviour.'

'And He amongst them, doing such wonderful things as He did!' said one of the girls.

'Yes, dear, He was amongst them; but they received Him not. So the dear Redeemer passed from them to that blessed home where only the pure in heart can enter; and that brings me back to the commencement of our lesson: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Do you see this?' Rose asked. 'Only the pure in heart, only those who are holy.'

'Is this to be attained on earth, Miss Rose?'

'It is, and must be before we can see God's face.'

'What, then, is this purity that Jesus speaks of?' asked another.

'It can be put in few words, Mary. It is entire conformity to the will of God, being like Him.'

'Like God! that can surely never be!' said the girl who had last spoken.

'Do you think, then, that God can demand from His people that which is impossible?' Rose asked.

'Indeed, I hardly know, Miss Rose; I don't think it is at all possible to be like God!'

'Certainly not, in His grandeur, dignity, or power, nor

yet in His glory. We can never be like Him in His great redeeming love; yet we are told in the Holy Book to be holy, even as God is holy! We are to imitate and follow His blessed example Who knew no sin, and in Whose mouth there was no guile.'

'How can this be, Miss Rose? How can I imitate the Lord Jesus? I am sure I should like; but I do not see how.'

'By seeking help from the Great Being who has given the command, Mary; by trying to walk in the light, in the light of the Gospel, which declares, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin;" by getting a saving acquaintance with Him through that light. I hope and believe that this blessed influence is coming in to us, illumining our minds, and making us to see, what we have not all seen before, our true state before God; and also giving us to see the real meaning of the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart."'

'Purity, and holiness, I suppose, Miss Rose, mean the same thing—a thing by itself?'

'It is distinct from all that is wrong and sinful, of course,' Rose replied. 'Still, purity is formed of many virtues combined. A rose leaf, or part of a blossom, is a beautiful thing, no doubt; but it is not a complete thing. No! a complete flower is composed of parts. It must have the colour, shape, and perfume that belong to its class, to make it perfect. An idea of this kind is conveyed to us by the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, when he compares those brought to God to a building well planned, fitly framed together, Jesus

Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. I read, the other day, that, in order to fully understand this, we should remember that the strength of a building lies in its angles, or corners ; and that the corner stone is that which unites the different sides, and compacts them together ; and that the chief corner stone is that which is laid at the foundation, on which rests the whole weight of the angle of the building, and which is the principal support of the edifice. That is an explanation of value to us this afternoon. We want to see what it is that makes up the beautiful thing we call purity. If we speak of it as a structure, or a spiritual house, we must have a foundation. This is already laid, as you know ; for you have read : " Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." Isaiah gives us the same truth : " Behold, I lay in Zion a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone." This, then, is the base of the beautiful thing called purity. I said it was a compound of many virtues, that together formed a beautiful whole. Let us see how this is done.'

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LESSON CONTINUED.

Stand up, my soul, shake off thy fears,  
And gird the Gospel armour on ;  
March to the gates of endless joy,  
Where thy great Captain Saviour's gone.—WATTS.

‘THE Holy Spirit of God commences this structure, then, by convincing the sinner of his state before that Being Who cannot look upon iniquity, Who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil.” He sees himself as he never saw himself before ; feels that, without God takes pity upon him, he will be lost. This is what we understand by *conviction of sin* ; and whether it come to us like the dew, or like a whirlwind, or however it may come, if we listen to its solemn warning, it surely leads us to the next thing in the building, that is, *repentance*, sorrow for the sins that have been shown to us by the convincing light of God’s Holy Spirit.’

‘I heard the rector preach one Sunday, Miss Rose, and he said repentance came to all who saw themselves sinners ; but not to all alike. I don’t think I quite understood him.’

‘That must be so, Carry. None of us are constituted alike ; some of us feel much more strongly on some things than others, even on this momentous thing—repentance ; but whether it be like David’s, when he cried, in sore



anguish, "Against Thee have I sinned ; have mercy upon me, O God ; blot out my transgressions ;" or like that of the publican, when he stood in self-abasement before his offended God, not daring to lift his eyes towards heaven, as he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner ;" or like the terrified jailer, who held the apostles in custody, when he, in the dead of the night, cried, "What must I do to be saved ?" or like Saul, when the Lord Jesus spoke to him from heaven, and he inquired, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" or like the amiable Lydia, who listened and quietly followed the Lord—it produces in the mind a change that affects the entire nature. It turns it towards the only Being who can save, just as the flowers we spoke about the other day turn to the sun for light and warmth. Remember this, all of you, and don't be troubled if your experience is not that of your friend. God, the All-wise, understands your case exactly. Ella Carr, your good father does not think that the same treatment will suit all the flowers, does he ? Have you not seen him give shelter to some, light to others, support to the weak ones, and comfort to the drooping ?'

'Yes, Miss Rose, many times have I watched him, and thought of the need there was to understand their nature.'

'That is exactly the idea I wanted you to have ; and be sure, dear girls, that, though your repentance and the change that accompanies it may all be different in form, if it be sincere, it will lead you to the next thing in the structure we are talking about, that is, *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ—faith, or perfect dependence on

His atonement and intercession. Seeing your need of Him, and hasting to Him, taking hold of Him, some with a trembling hand, others with a strong grasp, but both holding, nevertheless ; looking up to Him, some with a trembling, sobbing heart, only just whispering loud enough to be heard in heaven, "Lord, I believe ;" others crying aloud in their strong confidence, "O Lord, I will praise Thee : for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and now Thou comfortest me." Now is felt the joy of *acceptance*—the soul is saved. The effect of these things is seen in all the future life. It is not to be hid ; but, like the leaven in the meal, it affects the whole lump. You see how this is done every week yourselves ; you watch the rising mass of flour, and you mark the difference the leaven or yeast you have placed in it makes ; it works its way through every particle of the flour, and makes it fit for the next process under your hands.'

The girls seemed to understand Rose, as she spoke in this simple way ; and she went on to say, 'That is the way in which the new leaven enters into the life of a converted person. It has been said, it gives a head to know religion, a tongue to talk about it, and a heart to embrace and love it. An old writer says that "when God made man, He began at the outside ; but when He saves a man, He begins at the heart." That is so. A man with a new heart is a new creature—old things are passed away, all things are become new. He has a new name—it is Christian. He has a new nature ; he has put on Christ Jesus. He has a new inheritance ; he has the promise of the life that now is, and of that

which is to come, and he carries with him the title-deed to his mansion in the skies. He has new relations. God is his Father, Jesus is his elder Brother. He has new work ; he puts his hand to the Gospel plough ; and new joy, in seeing others brought into the enjoyment of the same precious faith as himself'

'What a happy state such a person must be in, Miss Rose!' said one girl; 'and there is nothing further to be done, if a person once gets into this way. I suppose they are safe for ever, are they not? I once heard a man say that he was as sure of heaven as if he were there then.'

The young teacher paused for a moment, and then replied : 'If your friend continued to lead a life of holiness, I am sure God would take care that he reached home in safety ; but the brightest evidence God ever gave to any one would die out without something more ; there must be *perseverance*. It is just as necessary as it is to add fresh fuel to our fires, or give daily food to our bodies. If you were so insane as to forget to eat or drink for one single day, imagine your weakness. If you neglect to put fresh fuel to your fire, though it have burnt brightly in the morning, there would be nothing but ashes by night. So must you every day seek for fresh supplies of spiritual food, that the new life may be kept in health and vigour. Out of a life thus consecrated to God evidences of the change wrought by the purifying blood of Jesus will appear in your every-day conduct. *Pride*, that has probably been one of your faults, will be kept in subjection. You will cultivate a spirit of humility, try to be like

the meek and lowly Jesus. You will be careful to avoid that hateful and most wicked thing called *slander*. Your friend or neighbour's character will be sacred to you. You will take care that no word, or look, or gesture of yours shall in any way injure another. If there be a fault, you will rather hide than expose it. You will be no *talebearer*. Even if you know a thing to be true, you will do well to remember the words of the wise man : "Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." You may remember seeing the boys last winter making the huge heap of snow. Yes? Well, do you remember that the foundation of that heap was but a handful of snow rolled by my brother with his hands, and when it fell down, each of the boys gave it a turn over, until it became too large to be moved? It had taken up a fresh amount of snow each time it turned. A person who once sets a tale in circulation never knows the mischief that may follow; for, like the ball of snow, it will be enlarged or coloured by each person who takes it up. So please remember, when there is the least inclination in you to repeat anything bad you may have heard, it is not one of the fruits of the Spirit. A Christian will speak evil of no one, and will cultivate a love of *truth*. You will not only not tell an untruth; you will not act one. You will not, by silence or otherwise, give assent to what you know to be untrue; you will not indulge in the pernicious practice of telling untruths for amusement, or make promises that you do not intend to keep.

'*Envy* will have no part in your life; there will be no room for the "cankerworm that destroys all a man's

happiness ;" you will rather rejoice in the prosperity of your neighbour, and rejoice with him. *Forgiveness of injuries* must have a place in your heart. On this hangs your own pardon. This is a fact settled by the blessed Lord when He said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." *Charity*, too ; for, if a man see his friend or enemy in want, and does not minister to his requirements, how can he say he has the spirit of his Master in heaven ? We shall do well to remember that He said, "The poor ye have always with you." *Chastity* of thought, of word, and deed, is surely found in the heart that is pure. The eye, the hand, the foot is carefully guarded, that they sin not. *Patience* under the various dispensations of God's providence must be carefully cherished ; we must all try to be assured that God knows what is best for us. As you pass on through life, carry this with you. God surely knows best, and will do best. You will meet with trials, no doubt, we all shall ; but if we are patient under them, they will be so much the lighter to bear, and we shall come out of them so much the more pure. *Anger*, irritable tempers, and hastiness of speech must be guarded against. Let the law of kindness dwell upon our lips.

'To build up this structure we read about, the Father of all Mercies has placed in our hands the never-failing power of *prayer*. My dear sisters, do you know anything of this heart-breathing, soul-longing prayer, that can and, if you use it, does bring you close to God ? Do you ? Do you pray for grace to be a fit temple for

the Holy Ghost to dwell in? Are you built up? Are you pure in heart? O, are you? I am a simple woman like yourselves, and would press this question home to my own heart, Am I a fit temple myself? Am I pure in heart? I bend before the throne of mercy, and pray to be all my God wishes; and I thank Him for the blessed hope I have. And this I want you to share in, because of the blessed assurance given by our beloved Lord: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." *See God!* Yes, see Him in the pathway of life, know that He is at your right hand; nay, more, feel that He is in your heart, guiding your footsteps, and ordering your life; see Him when your flesh and your heart fail you; when you step into the dark river of death, hear Him say, "Fear not! I am with thee!" see Him as you enter the portals of eternal glory; see the King in His beauty, and dwell in His presence for evermore. I want you all to know this.

'Ah, dear Miss Rose,' said one, tears falling from her eyes, 'if I could only see Him there!'

'Carry, there is no "if" in the case to those who love and serve Him here. You must seek Him with your whole heart, and He will be found of you. He is ready to forgive. To-day He says, "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me."'

When Rose Clement dismissed her young friends, she did not dismiss their spiritual welfare from her mind; but, as she went about the various duties of her home, she prayed that the blessing of the Lord might follow her work. Simple, modest, pure-minded Rose! In the day of the Lord's coming many Maries and Carries will

be found at the right hand of the Saviour, led thither by thy gentle hand.

The Reverend Richard Clement was happy and blessed in his darling Rose, happy in his work as God's minister, happy in his household ; but not happy in his son. It is said there is a hidden sorrow in every home. The rector's sorrow was his son. He had learned, by bitter experience, how

Sharper than the serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HUBERT.

Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.—SOLOMON.

**H**UBERT CLEMENT left home under very favourable circumstances, and well recommended from the school where he had for the two previous years held the enviable position of 'captain.' The college selected was the one where his father had matriculated, passed honourably, and taken his degrees. Some of the men of his time were now in good positions in the old place. One, who had known and still remembered his old college friend, wrote, in reply to a letter sent to him by the rector respecting Hubert's going into residence at once, as follows :

'MY DEAR CLEMENT,—We shall be glad to receive your son. I find that rooms can be placed at his disposal in the college ; arrangements as to furniture, etc., you, as an old university man, understand as well as myself. I trust that the young man will be all your son ought to be. If we find him to be steady and persevering, we can, I do not doubt, give him some of the many advantages to be derived from the benefactions our college possesses. I may say, our chests are full, though, as of course you are aware, they are only open to the deserving. I shall be very



glad to give your son any help or advice at any time he may require it, and trust he may be a credit to his father's name, as well as to his college.

‘Believe me, yours faithfully,

‘S. GARGRONE.’

A few days saw Hubert an inmate of St. Michael's College, that being the name by which we know the place of his abode. He is now a member of the university, and an obsequious man-servant waits to receive his orders. There are the books to unpack and place on the shelves; there is a picture, a portrait of his father, to hang up; he will have it just over the chimney-piece, where he can see it every day. There is the tutor to see, and the term's work to be arranged. There are the cap and gown, so dear to the freshman, to be purchased. There is the embarrassment of the first day's ‘hall,’ that is, going down to dinner, with not one familiar face to greet him. The next day, early chapel, lectures, evening chapel, hall; next day, the same. This is all monotonous and dreary to a country youth such as Hubert was; but, nevertheless, he would have fallen into the routine of the place, and have become an earnest student, but for the influence of a few men who made his acquaintance all too soon. These were idle and dissipated lovers of pleasure. The circle of his acquaintance soon widened, and before the first term was completed Hubert was acquainted with most of the fast men of the place—‘horsey men,’ ‘dog-fanciers,’ ‘billiard-table keepers,’ and all the host who are in the habit of watching for the unwary and idle. It surprised Hubert that tradesmen should be so liberal with

offers of goods; especially that so many others should be anxious, as they seemed to be, to lend their money to him and, as it seemed, to all the men. He, however, found out, when too late, that the plausible gentlemen who had so much money wherewith to assist needy and foolish spendthrifts, were principally 'schemers and cheats.'

Hubert, in the early part of the term, had been invited to a 'wine supper.' That he was shocked is saying little—he was horrified at the quantity of wine and spirits that disappeared from the board of his host. The ribald song, the coarse joke, were distasteful to him; the fumes of tobacco were overpowering; and he left early, not intending to go to another such place if he were pressed to do so. But, unfortunately, he was again invited, and, though he at first refused, finally complied. It did not seem so dreadful this time to see the way in which the men drank, or swore; the very doubtful stories told did not shock him so much as before; he blushed to find himself joining in the laugh that followed one of them. He remembered that his father would not like to see him there; and Rose—but he would not think of his fair, pure sister in such company.

'I will go in five minutes,' he said to himself; but he did not. Wine was pressed upon him; he did not think of its potency, or the effect it would have upon him. He had a dim, confused recollection of slipping from his chair, and of some one carrying him into the open air; then of sundry falls and bumps. Nothing more.

The next morning the misguided young man awoke

with a burning thirst and throbbing head. Breakfast was laid on the table by his servant, who, as soon as Hubert had seated himself, removed the cover from the cutlet he had ordered to tempt the appetite of his master, for this man had large experience in such matters as supper parties ; but Hubert could not eat.

‘Give me some brandy, Robert,’ he cried, peevishly.

‘Neat, sir ?’ the man asked.

‘Yes, and a good lot of it ; I am dead beat.’

The man did as he was bid, and Hubert drained the glass. It was stronger than he had imagined, for it was a moment before he took his handkerchief from his mouth. Now that he did so, he raised his eyes to the portrait of his father, and caught the grave look on his face. For a few moments he sat as if spellbound, and before his mind passed things that he had, in the few weeks spent in college, nearly crushed out of his mind. He saw his excellent father as he bade him ‘good-bye’ in the oak-panelled study, and heard the words he used as he held his hands in both his own. He had said, ‘Remember us, my son ; think of us every day ; but, above all things and before all things, remember God. This is my last charge to you. Do not forget God !’ He saw his sister, as she stood with both hands resting on his shoulders, her eyes full of tears, as she lifted her pure lips to his in a farewell kiss ; and heard her say, ‘Brother, play the man,’ and O, false heart ! he remembered saying, ‘I will, dear Rose, you may trust me.’ The scent of the old-fashioned lilacs that grew by the study window seemed to be wafted across the place, as these things came to his mind, and hot, bitter tears fell

from his eyes. He saw himself turn upon the step of the hall door, to embrace his sister once more, and clasp his father's hand again. He saw the dog-cart at the door, John, with grave, kind face, waiting to drive him to the station; and he remembered the grip of the honest hand, as he bade him good-bye, and said, with deep feeling, 'Bring no sorrow to the Rectory hearth, Master Hubert.' Like the record of an accusing angel came to him his own reply to the faithful man: 'I never will, John, never.' Hubert wept—wept like a little child. As the hot tears fell from his eyes, words of prayer trembled on his lips, and a subdued feeling came over his mind.

'It is not too late,' he said, half aloud, as he once again, and with a little more courage, looked up at the portrait of his father. 'No, it is not too late. I will write home, and tell them all how I have fallen; and I will ask them to pray for me. I will pray for myself; I will be better, I——'

At this moment there came a loud knocking at his door. At this moment, that should have been the turning-point in his young life; for in things spiritual, as well as temporal, the truth of Shakespeare's words may be seen:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea we are now afloat;  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our venture.

In much less time than it has taken to pen these

lines, the door is opened, and two men, older than Hubert, and of dissipated appearance, entered the room; and he sprang to his feet, as their loud laugh fell upon his ears. Why did they come at that moment? Why did they bring a blight with them, that fell on the lad's heart and blotted out all the home vision, the desire to lead a better life, the sorrow and shame for the past? Why, like the morning cloud and the early dew, did all melt away? Because Satan, who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and can use both fiery dart and wile, as he sees most likely to destroy the unwary soul; because he knew—for Satan is crafty and watchful, and understood Hubert better than he did himself—that he loved his sins more than he loved God, and that his sorrow was more for the consequences of sin than for sin itself. He knew, too, what weapon to use to bring down the soul he had marked for his prey. Comparatively few can withstand it. Its name is *Ridicule*.

'Hillo,' cried the elder of the two, whose name was Cartmell, 'what's up? is Papa's pet crying because its head aches this morning after being a naughty boy last night?'

'Or has that wretched scout stolen its toffy?' added the other. 'You have been crying, that's certain. Are you very sorry, and can't you forgive yourself, because you took a "wee drappie too much?" or have you seen a ghost? By-the-bye,' he added, not waiting for an answer to any of his former sneers, 'do you know how you came to your rooms last night?'

With a faint laugh, Hubert now said, 'My scout is

honest; I have not seen a ghost, and I do not know how I came home last night.'

Both his visitors laughed loudly. 'No, you were too much "screwed" to know anything, I expect; so, as you are in such a state of ignorance, I must enlighten you. You found yourself with your boots on, I expect.'

'Well,' said Hubert, feeling very foolish.

'And your coat, eh?'

'How do you know I did not undress?' he asked.

'For the best of reasons: I put you to bed.'

'You!' said he, 'how came that about?'

'Why,' returned his companion, 'you could not walk, could not even keep your seat, but would go to sleep under the table; so Gordon and I thought it would be an act of charity to carry you between us to the gates, believing you could get to your room; however, you could not; so we persuaded the porter to let us carry you upstairs; and we shot you into your crib like a cart of bricks. That is how I know, old man.'

'I am really sorry and ashamed,' Hubert began, when he was interrupted by both men at once saying,

'Don't be ashamed, then, and don't be a "duffer."'

'We are going to make a day to Snatchem,' said Cartmell; 'will you come? It will do you good after last night's row.'

'I don't think so, thanks,' said Hubert, with a glance at the portrait. 'No, I think not. Sit down and breakfast, will you?' he said, in a tone of entreaty; 'I am awfully dull.'

Both men, however, had breakfasted, as they told him, on 'broiled chicken and devilled kidneys.'

‘Dull, you must be, you know,’ said one, ‘so just come with us ; don’t shut yourself up like a hermit.’

‘I hardly know what to say,’ Hubert mused ; but he did not look up at the portrait again. ‘How far do you call it to Snatchem ?’

‘Ten miles, available by road or river, as the guide-book says.’

‘How do you intend to go ?’ he asked.

‘Tandem ! You come, its awful fun, I tell you.’

‘I don’t know, I am sure ; I did not intend to go out to-day ; I have been out a great deal of late. Shall we be back in time for hall ?’

‘Hang it, no ; we shall dine at Snatchem.’

‘I shall get into a scrape with the tutor. I have missed lectures sadly of late,’ said Hubert, wavering.

‘Tell him you were sick. If he saw your white face just now, he would be sure you were sick.’

‘Suppose, then, he should hear that I went to Snatchem.’

‘Tell him you went for your health,’ said the unscrupulous man.

‘Will he believe me ?’

‘No ! I should say not,’ the other replied, laughing ; but what does that matter ? Who cares ? We are in for a spree. Say if you intend to come or not.’

‘I will come,’ said the weak Hubert. ‘What about expenses ?’

‘You bear your proportion, of course.’

‘Yes, that is only right ; how many are going ?’

‘As many as the drag will hold ; one or two ladies are to go with us.’

‘Ladies! what kind of ladies, may I ask?’

‘Jolly girls, who don’t stick at a bottle of champagne or a glass of hot punch now and then; can smoke a cigarette, too.’

‘How can you call people of that kind *ladies*?’

‘Your idea of what constitutes a lady seems to be limited,’ Cartmell sneered. ‘Your sisters, if you have any, are, I expect, the standard you would measure all other women by.’

‘My sister, for I have only one, is—must be—immeasurably superior to such—such—persons, I cannot say ladies, as you mention; so we won’t talk of them, please. I shall go with you, thanks. After to-day I shall go in for work; I mean it.’

‘Ahem,’ coughed Cartmell. ‘Bring your cornet, and we will astonish the natives on our return,’ he said, as he looked back into the room.

Hubert merely bowed assent. A passage from Holy Writ came to his mind, as it had before, while his worthless companions were with him. The ridicule they brought to bear on his scruples would not allow it to do the work God intended it to do. Now that he is alone, it is there: ‘My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.’ Did he listen? Yes! conscience would be heard. Did he obey the command placed before him? No! He became irritated, cross with himself, with the men just gone; he walked up and down the room musing, ‘What must I do? It’s hard that I can’t do as others do, and enjoy life.’ Enjoy life! What enjoyment can a man find in sitting with ten or twenty men in a close room, where there are to be seen clouds



of tobacco smoke, bottles of wine, gin, brandy, and pewters with beer ; where the smell of all these things, and the very doubtful conversation that is indulged in, are such as no one dare introduce his mother, sister, or future wife into upon any account ? Enjoyment ! rather, depraved and wicked appetite. 'It is hard,' said the ignoble Hubert. He found out that the way of transgressors was hard, and that before long. Another passage came to him, and fell on his heart with ominous sound : 'He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' Hubert drew a long breath, stood still for an instant, then crossed to where he knew his cornet to be kept, and took it in his hands, muttering, 'I will go, because I have promised ; but it shall be the last time.' Thus he tried to quiet his conscience ; thus he played with Satan, who drew the meshes that were already about him closer than before.

What a pitiful sight was this handsome young Englishman, who, in his heart, knew that he was about to do, nay, was doing, that which would cause his sister to shed tears of sorrow, that would make his father's heart ache, that would, if such a line of conduct were persevered in, bring ultimate ruin to himself ; and yet had not the moral courage to say, No ! 'I shall be laughed at,' he told himself ; 'no one will make anything of me if I don't do as others do, and so——.' Ay, and so other men had in this same room, as well as in every room held within the grey walls of St. Michael, fought with vice in its various forms. Some, like Hubert Clement, fell ignobly, and the tide of all their future

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turned, leaving the shattered barque of their reputation on the dry, barren shore. Others, however, had resisted evil, had given themselves to study, had succeeded. These are the men who fill our pulpits, who sway the people from platforms, who plead in courts, and who fill the seats in the Houses of Parliament. Look to yourselves, young men of every grade in life. Be you son of reverend rector or of Methodist minister, be you at the desk or behind the counter, at the carpenter's bench or at the bottom of the mine, quit yourselves like men. Be strong, pray earnestly to God to help you, and learn to say, No ; so shall you in honour take your place in the state of life in which it shall please God to put you.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.

On every human soul there lies  
A little dusky speck of sin,  
As small as a mote's eye in size ;  
But when that speck doth once begin  
To work, it swift and swift extends  
Till the whole soul it comprehends,  
And all its powers overclouds.

Translated by W. R. ALGER.

**W**ITHIN two hours Hubert is with his companions, seated in the conveyance that is to take them to their destination. The ladies are taken up just outside the town. They are 'loud' and 'fast,' and talk 'slang.' All their manner is repulsive to the lad at first. After a while, however, he joins in the conversation, thinks they are rather witty, and laughs to see the way in which one of them cajoles a man, who sits opposite to her, out of the gold locket that hangs from his Albert chain. By the time the journey is accomplished he has forgotten entirely the conviction of the morning.

The man named Gordon linked his arm into that of Hubert, and they together went into the 'Sun.'

'Now, I want to speak to you, Clement,' he began. 'You were a bit in the dumps this morning. Yes. I

saw it : but you must not do that sort of thing. Suppose you did get over the line ; you were not the only one who went screwed to bed last night, I can tell you. What ! promised your father not to drink ? but you know that's absurd. When you are in Rome, you must do as Rome does. I should not tell that, if I were you ; you'd get an awful roasting, I can tell you. You said you should read hard. Well, so you can at the proper time ; but the proper time is——'

'The proper time is to-day,' said Hubert, interrupting him. 'I know it, though I am here ; but I do not intend to go out much after to-day, and I mean to read hard, so as to be ready for my examinations.'

'Without doubt,' returned Gordon, yawning, 'intentions are good things. It seems to me that I have read somewhere that the way to a certain place that I am too polite to mention is paved with good intentions. Of course, you must read ; but you are not like the poor beggars who have to live by their brains, and so must beg or starve.'

'Certainly I am not,' Hubert answered, with some pride. 'I have a liberal allowance now ; and when I am of age I shall be a rich man, thanks to my old aunt.'

'Exactly,' cried the other ; 'then why should you bother ? Now, my motto is this, "A short life and a merry one." I shall tell you when to begin hard reading, d'ye hear ?'

'Yes, thanks ; I shall enjoy myself, this time, any way.'

So the silly youth again followed where the bolder men led. He became fascinated by the doings of the day ;

his ear heard and gave place to the tempter, his eye saw and was captivated by the pleasures of sin. His soul no longer shrank from the sinful practices around him ; he familiarised himself with them, and sin reigned. Ah, witless, reckless Hubert ! what think you of the God you are grieving, the Spirit you are quenching ? what of the loving father at home ? of your fair young sister ? What ? nothing !

Hubert emptied his purse at the gaming table. He had nothing left to pay his own share of the dinner, nor had he any cash to lend his friend Gordon, who said he had forgotten to bring his purse ; so he left in the hands of the landlord an I.O.U. for £7 10s. 6d. There was no cornet playing on the way home, for Hubert lay helplessly drunk at the bottom of the drag. He was given into the hands of the gatekeeper, and the hour of his arrival was marked half-past one.

Too ill to rise next day, chapel, hall, and lectures are missed. A message from the tutor is brought to Hubert ; this he knows he must attend to. The gentleman severely reprimands him, and threatens to send him home to his father ; but, upon promises of amendment, reduces the punishment to the lighter one of not being permitted to be out of his rooms after seven o'clock each evening for the next fortnight. But if Hubert cannot leave his rooms, he can and does have men to see him in them. They are up a stone staircase, far away from those occupied by the heads of the college, so that the sound of revelry cannot reach them ; and servants are bribed not to disclose the proceedings. So the same reckless expenditure goes on, the same vile

desires are fostered, and Hubert surely descends lower, yet lower.

‘Robert,’ he said, one morning, to the scout, ‘I am going to have some new pictures. I want one large one to fill up the chimney-piece.’

‘Yes, Sir,’ said the man ; ‘must I take this one down ? Now, Sir, this is the portrait of the rector !’

‘Yes, that must be removed to another place.’

It is due to Hubert to say that he could not bear even the gaze of his servant, as he removed the once dearly-loved face ; but turned to the window, and pretended to be engrossed with the look-out.

‘Where would you like this put, Sir ?’

‘I don’t quite know, Robert ; put it down in the corner yonder—yes, there.’

As the man placed it where his master desired him, the light from the open window fell on the picture, which proved to be just the right light to bring out the face with its true expression. The painted eyes in the picture met the living eyes of the guilty youth, and he shuddered as he said, with a low voice :

‘Turn the picture to the wall ; it may get scratched.’

For a few seconds he thought, ‘I will bring it out of that place ; I shall always know it is there ;’ but he did not, neither remembered the words of Hagar, ‘Thou God seest me.’

It may now be told that the picture never left that corner during Hubert’s stay in the University. Yet he did not scruple to send home for money to the parent he could not bear to look upon, nor to write

letters to him that were not true, making excuses for himself when he failed, as he did, in his examinations.

Bills began to crowd upon him—heavy bills. Very many of them dared not be taken home ; but, then, he could borrow from the lenders. It was not allowed, he knew that very well ; but he was so dreadfully in debt that he must borrow. Besides, he would soon be of age now. So, wrapped up in selfishness and self-indulgence, he went his way ; but he took nothing from the chests of the college. He never sought the counsel of the gentleman who had offered to befriend him. The men who first drew him aside were expelled from their college for their gross misconduct, so that he was released from the hold they had of him ; but he formed other acquaintances of the same description, and gradually sank lower in the scale of society, despite the interposition of the good men of his college, of whom there were many, and the entreaties of his sorrowful father and sister. Notwithstanding that Wisdom uttered her voice, and besought him to turn at her reproof and live, he would not. What wonder that he was filled with his own ways !

For a short time let us bid farewell to the reckless Hubert, and turn to the purer atmosphere of Rednall Rectory, where we shall see something of its young mistress, and, further on, of the master and his man, as well as a few others, who have not as yet put in an appearance in these pages.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CONFIRMATION.

O, God most bounteous ! O, Infinite of goodness and of glory !

The knee that Thou hast formed shall bend to Thee ;  
The tongue that Thou hast tuned shall chant Thy praise ;  
And Thine own image, the immortal soul,  
Shall consecrate herself to Thee for ever.—C. SMART.

**T**HE Rector of Rednall had for some time past been assisted in his duties by a young curate, who rejoiced in the name of Paul St. Gregory. There was a tinge of 'High Church' about his very name, as well as in his general appearance. His face was smoothly shaven, his hair as closely cut as the hairdresser could make it ; his dress 'strictly cleric'—that is, the coat buttoned tightly up to the throat, almost strangling the bit of white cambric that passed round his neck and served for a tie ; this same coat descended below the knees, over nether garments of the same dark hue. 'As conceited a young man as one would wish to see,' had been the remark of one lady, as she left the church, where she had heard him give what he called his sermon, but what she herself considered a very poor essay on the uses of money.

When this young man came to Rednall, he expressed himself strongly on the 'awful amount of Dissent' to



be found there, and declared his intention to 'exterminate it.' He commenced to do so by calling on the various householders, and inviting them to church, honestly believing that, if they only heard him preach, they would never more depart from the arms of 'Mother Church.' He was not successful in that effort.

'The poorer classes, however,' he said, impertinently, 'can be bought, and there are certain gifts that are for their class. I shall suggest that none receive anything who do not regularly attend church.' This he really did suggest to his superior, who, in his gravest tones, and with marked displeasure, said:

'You will be good enough to carry out the wish of the various benefactors. The charity that comes first is—I forget the exact wording; how is it, Rose?' turning to his daughter.

'The money is to be divided in equal portions between twelve poor men, who shall be over sixty years of age and of good repute, irrespective of creed or persuasion. Those are the words, papa.'

The curate gave a prolonged 'O!' 'Still, I presume,' he said, 'you would give preference to church attendants?'

'Miss Clement will assist me in the matter,' said the rector, ignoring the last observation the curate had made; 'you had better be assisting the boys in getting ready for confirmation. You must be particular, St. Gregory; nothing is to be introduced but the plain Gospel teachings. My daughter will arrange to call upon the girls, and give their names to you or to me, so that they may all be met and instructed as to the

nature of the ceremony, and also learn what is required of them after they receive confirmation.'

This is done; the rector, his subordinate, and Rose working hard at given times to make the young people understand that in the ceremony they, in the presence of the assembled people and the chief pastors of the diocese, as well as that of the all-seeing, heart-searching God, undertook to lead lives of true piety.

'It is,' the rector said, 'a public profession of your faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His Son, as well as in the Holy Ghost. Other churches have other methods of accepting members to their community. This is the method adopted by our church, and is, we believe, founded on apostolic precept. So I charge you all, in the name of the Holy One before Whom you shall soon appear, think upon these things; and when you receive the outward sign of your acceptance into the visible Church, may the God of all grace help you to give yourselves to Him, spirit, body, soul, which is your reasonable service.'

The day of confirmation arrived, and with it the bishop who was to officiate. A very imposing personage is the prelate, as, in silken gown, with sleeves of finest lawn, he takes his place within the altar rails. There is some solemn church music, then the introductory chapter in the service is read by the person requested by the bishop so to do. He himself advances to the altar front, where some thirty young people are now kneeling, to put the usual questions to them, when Mr. St. Gregory, who has stepped aside to one of the pews, returns, accompanied by two young ladies. He

speaks in a low tone to the rector, who looks on in amazement. The bishop turns round and sees, rather than hears, the whispered conference. The rector informs the dignitary that a request has been sent that the two young ladies might receive confirmation alone. He makes no reply to the request as it is given to him, but, looking to where the girls stand with Mr. St. Gregory by their side, says:

‘Let the young women kneel beside those who, like themselves, need strengthening in the Divine life. This is God’s house; here there must be no distinctions, for with Him there is no respect of persons.’

A good deal confused, the young ladies took the first place that offered itself—that was by the side of the daughters of their father’s stable-man. I fear these young persons did not profit by the service. The rich girls were offended; the poor ones were frightened. But there were some who, like Rose Clement, gave heed to the solemn words, and answered the questions put to them in the fear and strength of the Lord. There was deep feeling in the hearts of many, as the bishop, with hands laid on the heads of the kneeling boys and girls, prayed: ‘Defend, O Lord, these Thy servants with Thy heavenly grace, that they may continue Thine for ever; and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until they come unto Thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.’ Now follows the Lord’s Prayer, that wonderful petition drawn up by a King to be presented to Himself. More earnest prayer, some fervent ‘Amens,’ when the service is concluded by the bishop in the following words: ‘The blessing of God

Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be upon you, and remain with you for ever. Amen.'

There are of us, in various Methodist bodies, some who dislike form and ceremony; yet it is surely a glad and glorious sight when groups of young persons present themselves publicly to the Lord, whether it be at the inquiry form in a Methodist chapel, or at the communion rail in the Established Church. To all such, who come in penitence and humility, God says, 'They that seek Me early shall find Me;' and O that those who have the oversight of the young were more in earnest for their conversion while their hearts are young and tender! Let us not, with regard to these youthful disciples, be 'weary in well-doing;' for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not. A modern preacher says: 'I think, when men sincerely try to work for God and souls, they are like men who go out to sow on a windy day. Very few seeds drop where they think they sow all; and when they go to seek for fruit, lo! there is but a handful, and the men are disappointed and grieved. But the seed is growing in other fields—by the wayside, on the mountain top, in the forest, everywhere; and at the end the sowers shall be astonished at their harvest.'

Fellow labourer, take courage. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that.' But of this one thing be assured, that the word of the Lord shall not return unto Him void; it shall accomplish the thing whereunto He sends it.

Let but the Church gather up the youths and

maidens, and the world would soon belong to God, and His righteousness cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Let the young listen and obey, render themselves a living sacrifice to God. In days past some did listen, did obey, and for a time ran well. Where are you to-day? Where? Do you forget the time when you said, 'Thine for ever, Lord! Thine through the atoning blood'? But your love waxed cold, and you forgot. Alas that it should be so! But—

I discern a tear on thy cheek;

It is well! Thou art humbled, and silent, and meek.

Now, courage again! and, with peril to cope,

Gird thee with vigour, and helm thee with hope.

Rose Clement shook hands with the girls as they left the church, and begged them to be grave and calm on their way home, and to go to their room and commune with God, so as to gather fresh strength to run the race with joy; then she went to her own home, where she had to do the honours at her father's dinner-table, the bishop being at once the friend and guest of the rector. In this beautiful old place he was persuaded to remain longer than it was his custom to stay in one place when from home; and here he learned a lesson, church dignitary though he was.

## CHAPTER IX.

### JOHN AND THE BISHOP.

I venerate the man whose heart is warm,  
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,  
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof  
That he is honest in the sacred cause.  
To such I render more than mere respect,  
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.

COWPER.

**P**RETTY early the morning after the confirmation had taken place, the rector, in company with his distinguished visitor, and followed closely by the elaborate curate, was to be seen in the gardens of the first-named gentleman. The bishop, in his silk and lawn, standing within the precincts of the communion table, with outspread hands, solemn and dignified, was a very different person as he sauntered, in a comfortable, if rather worn, morning coat, through the winding walks of the Rectory garden, smoking a not over clean pipe, his good-humoured face ever and anon breaking into a smile at the observations of his companions.

‘You have greatly improved the place in the last few years,’ he remarked, ‘and will, I suppose, remain here as long as you live?’

‘I hope so,’ the rector returned; ‘it is all I wish. It was a good thing for me when you gave me the living.’

‘I am truly glad it was in my power to do so.’

‘All men are not so fortunate as to have such a friend as your lordship,’ the curate remarked, with emphasis.

‘All men are not so worthy as my old college chum,’ the bishop returned, gravely, as he scanned the young man’s faultless attire. ‘If, Sir,’ he added, ‘you look for preferment in the church, you must prove yourself worthy. Our holy church needs men, not babes, not novices, but men who are not afraid of soiling their hands or losing the polish of their boots in the vineyard of the Lord. You will do well to think of this.’

The remarks of the bishop will hold good with regard to others than this young preacher in particular.

Being anxious to spare Mr. St. Gregory any further rebuke, the rector said :

‘I want you to see my peaches ; they are considered the finest in the country ; we are very proud of them.’

‘Thanks,’ said the bishop, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and laughing ; ‘I see that, though your hair and beard have grown grey, your memory is still green ; you have not forgotten my weakness for that delicious fruit.’

‘No, I have not forgotten your love for it, or the money you generally left at Jargonelle’s shop in exchange.’

‘Don’t remind me of my folly, Clement ; I don’t do that sort of thing now. I was a selfish fellow in that respect.’

‘But you grow peaches, I expect, pretty largely ?’

‘Well, no, not largely. I am sorry to say, my gardeners have not succeeded with peaches. You, I

suppose, must have a man who is well up to their culture, and has good previous knowledge?' remarked the bishop as they walked along.

'I don't think my man has had any previous knowledge, for he has been with me ever since I came to the place, and that is now twelve years. He, with some little help, looks after the stables—you have seen how well kept my horses are—and is really head gardener; indeed, I interfere very little with him; he is to be trusted in every particular.'

'You are a lucky man, I must say, Clement; you could not spare such a man, I suppose?'

'No, bishop, I could not. Here is John himself,' said the rector, as the subject of their conversation came in sight, with a spade on his shoulder and a rake in his hand.

At the sight of his master and his visitors, John was about to retrace his steps; but the voice of his master prevented it.

'I want the key of the peach garden. I want to show the bishop how well we manage,' said the rector to his man.

John lifted his cap from his head, as he stood to receive his master's orders; then replied, 'I will fetch the key, Sir, at once.'

'Do, John, please, and be quick.'

In a very short time the door was opened, and the delicate fruit, with its aromatic odour, greeted their olfactory senses.

'Delicious,' cried the dignitary, as, with a silver pocket-knife, he cut slice after slice from one of the



peaches with a quiet enjoyment that gratified his host exceedingly.

After a few questions on the culture of fruit, the bishop remarked that such valuable trees were a great boon to men ; ' don't you think so, my man ? ' turning to where John stood.

' Yes, indeed, Sir, to such as can get hold of their fruit ; but only a few favoured ones do that, you see.'

' I think,' said Mr. St. Gregory, ' that the rector's fruit is pretty fairly distributed about the parish. You would convey to us an idea that he has favourites, who alone partake of his good things.'

' Well, Sir, and my master has a few favourites—the old and poor, the sick and the sorrowful ; and that reminds me, Sir, to say that Bessy Ratcliffe sends her very best thanks for the grapes that you bade me take to her yesterday.'

The curate suddenly discovered that an earwig was making its way into one of the peaches, and he stooped forward to expel it.

' How is your old friend ? ' the rector asked.

' Not far from the Kingdom, Sir. A few more days, and she will be safely landed. She is very happy, praising God all the time, Sir.' John was mistaken as to the time of Bessy's death : she did not die then.

' Who is the person you speak of ? ' the bishop asked.

' A very old woman who has lived here for many years,' the rector answered.

' A good Churchwoman, evidently, and one who has profited by your ministry, Clement ?'

' No, that is not the fact ; Bessy is a Methodist.'

‘O, indeed,’ said the bishop, drily, as he cut a fresh slice of fruit from his third peach.

At this moment the curate gave up his search after the earwig, and looked brighter.

‘Have you many Methodists here?’

‘Sadly too many, my lord,’ said Mr. St. Gregory, answering a question addressed to the rector.

‘Take care what you are saying, St. Gregory,’ said that gentleman; ‘John is a Methodist.’

The bishop turned sharply round, as he heard this, saying,

‘I am sorry to hear that you are one of these people, John.’

In a very respectful manner, the worthy fellow said:

‘May I take the liberty of asking why you are sorry, Sir? I don’t know of anything to be sorry for myself.’

‘I am sorry because you, being a respectable man, ought to be in the fold, the true fold of the Church.’

‘I am in the Church, Sir; no doubt of that. I belong to the true Church, founded by the Lord Jesus and His apostles. O, yes, I would not be out of it for all the world, my lord.’

‘I mean the Church of England, as I think you know, John, and that is, of course, the true Church.’

‘Well, Sir, there is a difference of opinion as to the Church being confined between the walls of any one building. I believe the true Church to be composed of Christians of every denomination. It would be a dreadful thing for thousands if it were not so.’

‘Where do you worship?’ asked the bishop.

‘Well, Sir, I meet as often as I can with the people called Methodists, in a little chapel in the village.’

‘Yet you call yourself a Churchman.’

‘I beg pardon, Sir; I did not say that. I said I belonged to the Church of Christ; and I do, just as much as my good master does, or even as you, my lord. I say it with all respect, Sir; but I must hold to that.’

The bishop smiled, as he took from its branch another peach; then, turning to John, said:

‘So you have a chapel here?’

‘Yes, Sir, we worship under our own vine and fig tree, none daring to make us afraid.’

‘And have what you call good times, eh?’

‘Ah, yes,’ responded John, with beaming face; ‘and His banner over us is love.’

‘But do you not think it would be much better, and more respectful to your master, if you listened to him preaching?’

‘I do hear the rector preach once every Sunday, sometimes oftener; but I meet chiefly with the Methodist people, and am one of them.’

The good rector, who had stood looking on with an amused face, now said:

‘You have not told the bishop that you are a preacher yourself, John.’

‘A preacher!’ said that gentleman, with a short laugh. ‘Why, Clement, do you keep the opposition party so near to you as to have one of them in your service?’

‘It appears so, doesn’t it, John?’

‘Yes, Sir, and that one likes his place.’

‘And the master likes the man,’ returned the rector.

‘Still,’ chimed in the curate, ‘we are sure that it would be very much better if John could bring his talents to the old place—to the good old mother Church.’

‘Suppose I left the Methodist body, and came to church; what could you give me to do? I have noticed you laughing at the idea of my being a preacher. Now, Sir, I dare not give up preaching for my soul’s sake; I dare not; I should be condemned in the sight of the Lord, and bring a snare to my own soul. Then, if, some Sabbath-day, I felt I had a message from the Lord, and must deliver it; and I stood up in the church and began, in my simple way, to preach Christ; why, what a rush to the doors there would be, the more so if I had put on your surplice or black gown! What would you all say to it, I wonder?’ said John.

The bishop, with the rector, laughed heartily at John’s remarks, though the man himself was in very great earnest, and confronted the thin curate with a steady gaze, who, in reply to his question of ‘What would you all say to that?’ answered:

‘I should say that you were mad, as well as very much out of place.’

‘There it is, you see, my lord. They said the same of the apostles; but, if you notice, they went on preaching for all that.’

‘As you do, my good fellow,’ replied the bishop, laying his hand for one instant on John’s shoulder with a kindly smile; then added, ‘So you hold forth in the small chapel, do you?’

'Yes, my lord, I do.'

'Are you the only preacher? does all the duty rest on you?'

'Dear heart, no, Sir; we have regular preachers, and one of them comes round to preach to us and baptize any children there may be, and also to administer the Lord's Supper. Look here, Sir,' he went on to say, as he took from his breast-pocket a thin leather case that held his 'Plan; 'this is how we understand what we have to do;' and John explained to the bishop the mysteries of his Plan.

'Made from Bradshaw's system, I imagine?' he remarked.

'More likely Bradshaw made from this, Sir,' said John.

## CHAPTER X.

### JOHN GIVES HIS OPINION.

Knowest thou the importance of a soul immortal ?  
Behold this midnight glory—worlds on worlds !  
Amazing pomp ! Redouble this amaze ;  
Ten thousand add, and twice ten thousand more ;  
Then weigh the whole. One soul outweighs them all !  
YOUNG.

AS John folded his Plan, and replaced it in his pocket, the bishop helped himself to another peach. The rector, supposing the conversation to be at an end, left the place, followed by Mr. St. Gregory. The bishop, however, waited until John had locked the door and placed the key in his pocket. Then he resumed the subject by asking :

‘How often do you preach yourself, John ? every Sunday ?’

‘No, Sir ; I go by my Plan. But if anything happens that I cannot go on the day I am appointed, I change with some good brother or other.’

‘I see,’ replied the bishop, holding the peach still uncut between his finger and thumb. ‘I suppose you make a considerable noise occasionally ?’ he asked.

‘Yes, Sir ; we sometimes use our voices pretty much.’

‘Would it not be better if your people tried to check the excitement that is seen amongst you ?’

‘Check it, Sir! Nay, we are only too glad to get it. Check it! No, no; we love the revival glory, and the cry of sinners to God for mercy is the sweetest music to us. You see, Sir, that the noise is the evidence of life.’ John, warming with the subject, added: ‘I hope the Lord will save us from formalism. It is like the Dead Sea, or like the grave. If there is anything going on, there will be noise. Why, Sir, you know, there is noise on earth; there is noise in heaven—songs of joy; and we are sure there is noise in hell—the cries of the lost, who would give a thousand worlds, if they had them, to be for one hour in a Methodist prayer-meeting.’

‘That is so, without doubt,’ returned the bishop, stroking his chin. ‘Yes, the thought of all this ought to make men serious, whatever may be the difference of their opinions.’

‘Yet your lordship will scarcely hold with the fanaticism of the cause this man would advocate?’ said the curate.

‘I scarcely know how to answer you, St. Gregory,’ said the prelate. ‘I would there were more evidence of life in the true Church. I shall hail the day when all our young clergymen are filled with the life that was found in the first Church, and think less of self and more of souls.’

‘But, with all due deference to your opinion, Sir, may not God’s most holy work be carried on in a sober, quiet manner? I read of Lydia, whose heart God had opened. I do not think there was any excitement in the case.’ As he said this, the young man looked round on John.

'If I may speak, Sir,' he replied, 'you will find other than Lydia who have been brought in gently, as one may say; but, Sir, even in those cases there is, and must be, some effort, or there would be no change. The instances of expressed sorrow for sin are more than those of quiet conversions to God.'

'That is so,' the bishop remarked.

'Yes, Sir,' John went on; 'we read of those who went in sackcloth and ashes, weeping sorely on account of their sin; of some who could neither eat nor sleep for sorrow of heart.'

'Again you are right,' said the bishop, gravely.

'I have always noticed, Sir, that those who pass through the strait gate of bitter repentance make the best people in the new life; so that when there is a breaking in of the spirit of conviction, and men cry out for God, we hail it with gladness of heart. And I would to God that the spirit of strong crying to God for the salvation of souls rested on all the churches in the world.'

The bishop made no reply.

Mr. St. Gregory, however, said, a little scornfully:

'Then you, with your very superior wisdom, would like to see a—what you call—revival even in the church?'

'Yes, I would really be very glad. I have thought so when I have seen you leave the church doors as neatly dressed as if you were going to tea in some lady's drawing-room; not one trace of labour for God on your brow, not one hair of your head disarranged, nor the least bit of a wrinkle in your tie. And I have



wondered how you would feel, Sir, after two or three hours' hard wrestling with God for lost souls. I could not but think you would not look so prim.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed the bishop; 'good that, eh, rector? take some of the starch out of him, eh? I would give a trifle to see St. Gregory ruffled a bit.'

'Well, my lord,' said he, reddening, 'I should be sorry to descend to the practices John would give us an idea of.'

'Ah, Sir,' returned John, 'you would do a deal you now know nothing about, if you only felt the burden of souls, and thought that those for whom the blessed Lord shed His blood were going down quick into hell! If you only saw the real danger, I am quite sure you would be more lively.'

'You think so?' said the curate, disdainfully.

'I know it, Sir. You can be in earnest, I know; for you were, the day that Farmer Harkaway's bull chased you across the long meadow. I was a long way off; but I heard your cries for help. I know that before I could come to your assistance you were over the gate like a greyhound, and glad I was to see you escape, for it is a fierce animal, but a baby to the great foe that pursues mankind.'

That undignified run from the bull was a sore point with the curate; so, a little chagrined, he said:

'Well, take your own way as to the excitement, and your manner of doing good. Nevertheless, there could be something found for you to do in the church; it would be better for you temporally, too. You are getting old and ——'

Honest John saw in an instant what Mr. St. Gregory would next say, and burst out—

‘Sir, if you think I either could or would go to any place for the sake of the loaves and fishes, you were never more mistaken in your life. I am an Englishman, Sir, with ambition to keep myself and those God has given to me.’

‘Yet you live on the rector’s loaves and fishes.’

‘I work for them; I work hard. I appeal to my master.’

‘You do, my good fellow,’ returned the rector, with a meaning look at his curate. ‘Yes, John, hard all the week, and hard on the Lord’s day, too. I pray that we may all be as faithful in our stewardship.’

The young curate was anxious to show his zeal for the church before his chief; so again began:

‘You will not, I suppose, John, attempt to take from us our right Divine, right from ordination?’

‘God forbid that I should entertain such a thought, even if I could. We have each our place in God’s Church. You, my lord, will have much to think of. You have a lofty seat. God give you grace to fill it to His glory,’ said John, respectfully.

‘Amen,’ said the bishop; ‘I need it, John.’

‘I know my master, too, has days and nights of anxious care. *We*, too, Sir,’ he added—the curate wincing at the word ‘we’—‘we have our place, if we are only hewers of wood and drawers of water.’

The curate discovered something unusual in one of the flower beds, and the bishop took a slice out of his

peach, as John hastened to open the gate the gentlemen would pass through.

‘I have enjoyed your peaches, and, I must say, your conversation, too ; and though I do not agree with all you say, I feel you are doing what you think is right in the sight of the Lord, and must wish you well.’

There was something in John’s manner that prevented the bishop from offering money to him, as he wished to do, so he let fall back in his purse the silver coin he held in his fingers.

‘I should like to send you a book, John,’ he said ; ‘one that will help you with your Sunday work.’

‘I shall prize it very highly, Sir, I assure you,’ John answered.

The rector looked pleased, and remarked to the prelate :

‘I am sure John will be glad to have seen you to-day. —I dare say you never had so long a conversation with a bishop before, have you ?’ to John, who replied :

‘No, Sir, I never spoke to a gentleman of his lordship’s standing before, though,’ he added, reverently, ‘I every day of my life speak to the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul.’

‘A good and worthy man, Clement ; one that the best of us might learn from,’ said the bishop, as they returned to the Rectory. ‘I do not wonder that you prize him so much.’

‘Yes,’ returned the rector, ‘I do prize and value John Carr ; he is a true man, and true Christian ; a faithful servant, and real friend.’

## CHAPTER XI.

### AFTER-DINNER CONVERSATION.

A thought lay like a flower upon mine heart,  
And drew around it other thoughts.

E. B. B.

AS a matter of course, a very sumptuous dinner was prepared by the rector for his patron. Mr. St. Gregory was to dine with them, and duly appreciated the compliment; besides, he hoped to make an impression on the bishop, who could, if he liked, give him assistance in the church preferment he hoped for. The young man had made an impression on the bishop, but not in the direction he wished. When the cloth had been removed, the dessert and wine discussed, coffee was announced in the drawing-room, whither Rose had retired as soon as dinner was over. As the bishop sat with his cup in his fingers, he looked at the young hostess, and said:

‘Miss Clement, I have been thinking of the old woman your servant mentioned—Bessy something or other. I have not had her out of my mind for long together; a widow, old and poor, afflicted so sadly, too, yet always rejoicing. I should much like to hear that woman’s history. You, I presume, are well acquainted with it.’

‘I know dear old Bessy very well,’ Rose replied;

'but only as she is, and has been for many years past. I know her to be good; I know, too, that it always does one good to sit and converse with her; she seems to live so close to heaven: but of her early life I know nothing. She never mentioned it to me, and, of course, so young a woman as myself could not take the liberty of putting questions to one as old as Bessy on any subject she did not herself first mention; I should consider it an impertinence on my part.'

'Spoken like a true lady,' said the bishop; 'I wish all who visit the sick and the poor were as careful. They forget themselves strangely at times; they go at unreasonable hours, and make remarks and give advice that is uncalled for and unsought. I have always felt it must be very humiliating to people who have fought the battle of life bravely, and who understand the nature of true godliness, when quite young folk, who believe they have a mission, (as they may have, if they would only use a little discrimination,) press upon them their very tame and crude advice, as well as ask very impertinent and silly questions. I hope, my child, you will always continue in the same mind as to treating the poor with great respect. You will do much more good, and be the more loved.'

'You will remember my late dear mother, Clement,' he added, looking towards the rector, 'what a good and gracious woman she was, and how all classes, particularly the poor, loved to see her sweet face in their homes.'

'I do, indeed,' returned the rector, as the prelate wiped from his eyes the tears that always came at the mention of his mother.

‘She had formed a club of some sort for the benefit of the wives of the farm labourers in the district. There was a Miss Ferguson in the parish, who undertook to collect the weekly subscriptions. She was a mere girl, but qualified for that part of the business; but, having heard my mother speak to her humble friends on their various small concerns, she fancied she would do the same. The first house she would call at was owned by some respectable people. I am sorry to say she did not take the trouble to rap at the door, but walked in, saying, “Good morning, Mrs. Holmes; I have called for the club money.” “Good morning,” replied the mistress of the house a little coldly; “I will fetch the money in a moment.” The girl entered the amount in my mother’s book, and, as she replaced it in her pocket, asked, “How do you get along, Mrs. Holmes, these bad times?” “Very well, thank you,” still a little reserved; for she did not like the way in which the visitor behaved. “How many children have you, Mrs. Holmes?” “Five, Miss Ferguson.” “Dear me, what a number! too many, don’t you think?” “Certainly not; we should be very sorry to part with one,” said the mother. “Well, no, perhaps not; but, still, they are too many.” “Had you ever a mother yourself?” “Well, it is scarcely likely I should be here if I had not had a mother,” said Miss Ferguson, laughing. “No, of course,” said Mrs. Holmes, blushing at her mistake; “but I meant, did you ever have a grandmother? I fear, Miss Ferguson,” continued the good woman, “that you have missed your vocation as a visitor. You can collect the money all right; there

is no great difficulty in doing that; but you had better leave other things to the vicar's wife."

Rose laughingly remarked she would try to be at least more circumspect than Miss Ferguson had been.

'It would do the young lady good,' the rector said. 'We are all a little conceited at times, and it does us good to be taken down a trifle now and again.'

'Ah!' said the bishop, rubbing his hands, 'that reminds me of something that happened to me when I was just commencing my ministry. The story is against myself, but it is too good not to tell you, and you are at liberty to laugh at me if you like. It was in Oustry that my curacy lay, and I, like the young lady I have mentioned, thought I was capable of doing great things. Well, I undertook to visit the entire population! I don't say I did it; for in many places I got more than I bargained for. Still, it did me good, and made a better man of me by taking the conceit out of me, as you have said, Clement, and bringing me to my proper level as a Christian minister. Well, at the particular time I am about to mention, I had gone into a back street, and had seen several families, some of whom I liked; others I had, perhaps, better say little about. But, as I stood at the door of one tenement, where there was the noise of the shoemaker's hammer, and the noise had drowned the sound of my knuckles on the door, I heard a quavering voice sing,

I care for nobody; no, not I,  
And nobody cares for me.

And again I rapped, this time louder. "Come in, and be hanged to you," said the same voice. I entered,

and saw a little old man with a bald head, sharp, piercing grey eyes, that were surmounted by shaggy grey eyebrows. His whiskers were grey, like the hair that grew in curls round the back and sides of his head, and his eyebrows. It was a sharp, keen face, and as I stood for a moment, I felt he was "taking my measure." "You are the new parson, I expect," he said, looking in my face. On my telling him he was right, he said, "Well, that's all right; if you can find a place, sit down. You see I am

Just an old cobbler who lives in a stall,  
And it serves me for kitchen, and parlour, and hall."

He might have added, for bedroom as well, for a low bedstead was in one corner; on this I took a seat, as he resumed his work. "I am trying," he said, "to make something of this fellow's 'understanding,'" holding up for my inspection a pretty heavy-looking boot; "and a very bad sort it is." Seeing him disposed to be jocular, I chatted with him on one or two little matters; finally, I asked him, "Do you go to church?" "No," he said, hammering away at the "understanding;" "I do not go to church." "Perhaps you are a Dissenter," I ventured. "No, I am not a Dissenter, as you understand the word, though I do dissent from a good deal you parsons say. But I have no time to go to church; I am particularly engaged just now." And as he spoke, I saw that he was eyeing me furtively under the bushy eyebrows, and that a queer smile was on his little face. "Engaged?" I questioned. "Yes; we, the inhabitants of Ragged Court, are getting up a mission to the



aristocracy; we are anxious to see them converted." "Yes," I said; "how about funds? It always requires money, you know, for these kind of things." "There is our difficulty. You see our resources are not great; still," he said, taking from the drawer of the seat he occupied a small memorandum book, and pretending to read therefrom, though I saw the leaves were blank, "we have a few contributions; and, believe me," he said, in a tone of mock gravity, "they are worthy of the object: John Jackson, the ashes from a smoked-out pipe; Robert Naylor, the fag-end of a worn-out boot-lace; William Wabeler, the remains of a quart of beer when he has done with it; a seamstress, a broken needle and worn-out thimble; a farmer, a load of decayed potatoes; a navvy, a——." To what length he would have gone I don't know, if I had not stopped him by good-humouredly saying, "You must work hard, and get your contributions in; then, as soon as you have seriously set the affair afloat, get up another to the clergy, will you? If you can do us good, we shall be grateful, I assure you." He looked in my face, disappointed to find I was not angry; then said, in rather a spiteful manner, "You are all a bad lot, I know it." "Help to make us better," I said, in reply, determined to be good-humoured; "and now we have had a good chat, I must say good-bye." It may be, Mr. St. Gregory, that you have never seen the hand of a working cobbler?

'No.'

'Well, then, however good and honest it may be, it is neither white nor soft; but this man's was, I am sure,

the very dirtiest I ever saw in my life. With the utmost coolness, he held it out to me when I bade him good-bye, wet as well as dirty, for he had just taken from a mug that was placed not far from the place where he sat, and was half full of dirty water, a piece of leather that he had placed there when I entered; but, dirty and wet as it was, I had to take it; for, to tell you the truth, I was rather afraid of him, and I think he knew it. "Let me see you at church?" I said. "No; I don't think you will. But I'll tell you what. Do you come and see me sometimes," with another of his keen glances, "because, you know, we are brother chips—you mend souls, I mend soles." "Exactly," I said. "Let us both be good workmen." "Bravo!" cried the old man. "Mind you do come again. You are no fool, and I like you. Come soon."

When the merriment caused by the recital of the story was over, the curate remarked:

'Of course you did not.'

'But I did; and often, though apparently without making the impression I wished. So things went on, until one day he was taken ill. A woman who had seen him called at my rooms, and told me that "old Jackson, the cobbler," wished to see me. I went at once. "Did you send for me?" I asked, going up to the bed where he lay, looking pale and ill. "Yes; I was very lonely. I thought you would sit with me a bit." I told him how glad I was to come to him. "Now, that I am here, I shall stay three-quarters of an hour, then I have to attend a funeral; so, till then, shall I read you anything?" I asked. He pointed to

a Secularist paper, saying, "I suppose you will not like to read that?" "You are right," I said. "I always carry a small volume with me," I added. "Let me read to you from it." He watched me keenly as I took out my pocket Bible. "O, that!" he said; "I had nearly forgotten there was such a book. Well, you can tip us a stave if you like." Inwardly praying that God would let fall some grain of good seed in his mind, I read the parable of the Talents, after that the parable of the Prodigal Son. He made no remark, good or bad, neither did I. My conscience said, "Pray with him;" my coward heart said, "He will only mock and turn you into ridicule." I rose to go, and turned to shake hands with him. To my great relief, the old, quizzing look was gone. Then I dared not refuse to pray with him if I might; so I said, "Shall I pray with you?" "Ay, if you like," he said; "if it does no good, it can do no harm." When I rose from my knees, I saw that the poor fellow had drawn the bed cover to his face, and was wiping the tears from his eyes. I did not speak, for my heart was very full; I only held his hand, and looked in his face. At length he said, "Come again soon, and bring that," pointing to the Bible. "I will," I said. "Do you remember," I asked, "telling me that we were both soul-menders?" "Yes, I remember." "Well, then," I said, "will you let me try to help you to save yours, my poor fellow? Come to the Great Being Who waits to save—to mend, to make anew your whole being! Will you, Jackson?" I saw him put his hand across his eyes, and then, with a quivering lip, he began to say, "I know that my soul

is sadly out of repair—must be, like an old boot, almost, if not quite, past mending. It seems as if the top were worn out, all the seams ripped up, the welt broke, the sole quite through, and the heel all on one side. Can such an article ever make a decent piece of work?" Poor old man! the scorn and hatred he had nourished against others was gone; he saw there was something wrong in himself. Coming, as he did, humble and repentant, of course, God saved him, and in a few weeks took him to Himself.'

'How forcible are right words!' said the rector. 'If you had not gone with him, he might have died unsaved.'

'Yes, I felt that, and the circumstance not only gave me courage and confidence in my work, but taught me that under the roughest exterior there is some good, if we only go the right way to get at it. And how many gems God has where you least expect to find them, Clement!' resumed the bishop. 'Have you ever told St. Gregory of your having the tables so turned on you in your first parish?'

'No,' said the rector, 'I was thinking of the circumstances but a moment ago. I will tell him some time.'

'Tell him now; I always enjoy that story.'

The rector smiled, as he said, 'You must know, St. Gregory, that I once very nearly had my life frightened out of me. I, like many others, had a pretty good idea of myself, and did a good deal of visiting. A nice, rather elderly man lived not very far from the church. I often saw him, but had not yet called upon him. Upon a given day I proceeded to do so. I met him on his own threshold and spoke to him. "Will you not

come in, Sir?" he said. Thanking him, I followed the man into the house. It was a clean, bright house, and there were plenty of books about. From this I learned that my new friend was an intelligent man. "I hope you like this place, and the people, too?" he said. I said that I did, and hoped to be made useful here. "There is a large field for labourers," he answered, "for a man whose heart is right with God." I said, that was well, and stood up to admire a plant that grew in the cottage window. The good man politely showed it to me; then, setting it back in its place, came back to the point we had spoken of. This was awkward for me, for I did not know from experience the nature of saving faith; but he evidently thought that, if I did not, I ought to do so. So he said, "I hope, Sir, you will not take it amiss if I ask, Are you a saved man? Is your heart right with God? Can you say that God, for Christ's sake, has pardoned your sins?" I blushed and stammered, and at last said, "I hope so." "Hope is a very good thing," he returned; "but that is not enough. Are you saved?" Again I replied, I hoped so. "Hope so, Sir! You, a minister of the Gospel, to have got no further than that! Don't you, from heart-felt experience, know it?" "To be honest," I said, "I do not." This I said, trembling before a man whom I had come to visit as his pastor. Then he cried, "May the Lord have mercy upon you; for you are no better than a milestone, or a finger-post. You show the way, or you think you do; but you don't walk therein. I am very sorry. Kneel down, and I will pray for you."

'O,' said the curate, in horror, 'I am shocked.'

'I never heard a better thing in my life,' said the bishop, laughing. 'Go on, Clement. You had to kneel down, if I remember rightly.'

'Yes, yes. He was on his knees in a moment. I stayed to put the door to, before I knelt myself. The good old soul literally poured out strong cryings for me, and earnestly besought the Lord to open my blind eyes, to let me see my own danger, and make me fit to try and save others.'

'Yes,' said the bishop, 'the idea was right, whatever one might think of the procedure. What did you think?'

'I felt rather nettled at first; but the way in which he pleaded with God for me showed me how much he felt. I distinctly remember a new light breaking upon my mind as to my position as a clergyman and my state before God, as he said these words: "Lord, bless him, make him holy; for we know that those who bear the vessels of the Lord must be holy. Let holiness to the Lord be engraven on his heart and life." And I assure you I felt a something that I had not before, and was humbled; so much so, that I put out my hand and thanked the man earnestly. I never forgot that circumstance. I know I was better for it.'

'I suppose this person would ever after consider he had a kind of advantage over you?' said the curate.

'On the contrary, he treated me with the greatest deference, and respected my office. When I was about to leave his place, he said, "Don't think me impertinent; but I have delivered my soul. And may the

Lord bless thee and keep thee, cause His face to shine upon thee, and show thee His salvation." I am not ashamed of saying my eyes were wet when I left him.'

Again the bishop declared it was the best story he had ever heard, and beat his 'cobbler' by a long way. 'And now,' he said, 'I want to hear about this old woman that we seem to have forgotten. Do you know her story, St. Gregory?'

'I do not. She has her own class—I mean, her own kind of people, Methodists, and that sort.'

'Miss Clement considered it a privilege to talk with her,' the bishop remarked, gravely. 'Do not forget, Sir, that it is *your* duty to see, and help as far as you can, all that are either sick or sad!'

'My man will give you all her history,' said the rector.

'I should really like to hear it. Could I see him, Clement?'

'Yes, certainly,' rising to touch a bell. 'Will you tell John I want him here for a little while?' he said to the maid who answered the summons.

John was not at all put out by his master's order; for between this 'master and man' there was a strong bond, founded on mutual respect. In a few minutes he stood at the door of the room where his master sat with his guests, and was made acquainted with the bishop's desire.

## CHAPTER XII.

MINE, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS.

In age and feebleness extreme,  
Who shall a simple worm redeem?  
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart.  
O, could I catch a smile from Thee,  
And drop into eternity!

C. WESLEY.

‘SO come inside, John,’ said the rector, ‘and get yourself a chair.’

John’s were scarcely drawing-room shoes; but he walked to the far side of the room without much noise, and brought himself a chair, took his seat, and began his story.

‘Bessy Ratcliffe came to this place when I was quite a boy. She came on a visit to some distant relatives. They were small farmers, with several sons. One of them fell in love with Bessy, and proposed to marry her. She accepted him, and in some few months he went to fetch her to be his wife. I was only a boy at the time, but I very well remember what a nice, modest-looking young woman she was, and that she always dressed like a Quakeress, as to colours. She was a Methodist before she came; so, of course, joined in all the meetings for religious service that were held



by the society. They had no chapel at that time, but met at a cottage close to the new home of Bessy and her husband. George was a good man, and his heart was in the Lord's work, as well as his wife's; so that they lived in great happiness, he working on the father's farm, and she taking in sewing. Two children—boys—were on their hearth in the course of a few years; and Bessy thought it right to save all she could for the sake of these boys, to put them out to business; though, poor thing, the money was wanted long before the boys were ready for that. During one summer's day, when the hay harvest was being gathered in, George Ratcliffe was busy helping to stack. He thought the hay was being placed on one side, and got up to see if it were so. It lay very loose on the side he thought to be faulty, and he began to stamp it down firmer in its place. Getting too near the edge, he lost his foothold, and fell from the top to the ground beneath. He never spoke or moved after. His neck was broken.

'That was the beginning of Bessy's trouble. The news was conveyed to her by an indiscreet man, and the poor girl fainted away, and was ill for some weeks. She never saw him after he was dead. His mother said, "Don't, dear; always think of him as you saw him last, kissing his hand to the children as he left the house." The money they had saved came in well now; and as soon as Bessy could get out, she went amongst her friends to ask for work, that she might keep her little home together. George's parents did not live very long; both died within one year. That was a loss to the young widow; but she kept up wonderfully; for she

said, "I have George's children to bring up, and the Lord has promised to help me. I have hold of His promise." Though she was left alone, Bessy did not give up the Lord's work—none except leading the singing, I should say ; but she could not do that for some time ; yet she really seemed to keep things together somehow better than any one else did, and everybody loved her.'

'She was quite a deaconess to your little Bethel,' said Mr. St. Gregory.

'She was more than that, Sir. She was a preacher,' said John, 'like some of the women we read about in the Bible ; she was so.'

'O, ridiculous,' the curate began.

But the bishop, who had sat with his chin resting on his hands listening, showed the young gentleman, by a look, that he wished for silence ; then, turning to John, said :

'What women do you mean ?'

'I mean such as Priscilla, who, as well as her husband, expounded the way of God more perfectly to the eloquent Apollos ; such as Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord ; and Persis, who laboured much ; Phoebe too. Perhaps others, such as the Mary mentioned in the same chapter, and the Julia. Four others, daughters of one man, were, without doubt, preachers, speaking to edification, to exhortation, and comfort.'

'Yet,' remarked the curate, 'the apostle forbade women to preach.'

'Begging your pardon for contradicting you,' said

John, 'he did not do anything of the sort. He forbade them to ask silly questions, and, it may be, sensible ones at improper times. I dare say you know a great deal better than I do—because you are a scholar, and I have not that advantage—that it was a custom amongst the Jews to ask questions on anything the minister did not make quite clear to them, when speaking in the synagogue. The apostle did not consider it right for the women to do this. He bids them listen in silence, and if there was anything they wanted to know further than they could gather from the sermon, let them inquire from some one at home, not go speaking out in the synagogue.'

The man looked at his master, who smiled, and said, looking at the bishop:

'You see, my man is well up in these things; he has thought them well over, and in this particular he is right; for we know that if Paul had forbidden women to preach, or, as we read the word, "prophesy," it would have been very unlike him to give orders as to their appearance under the circumstance.'

'There certainly were women who were engaged in the churches in the apostles' days, and, according to many good authors, long after,' said the bishop. 'Their services are recognised by the Holy Ghost; but you see, John, the old order is changed. Then these are the women you believe your old friend Bessy to have imitated?'

'I do, Sir; and if "souls saved" be, as we sometimes say, the "seal of the ministry," then Bessy Ratcliffe's call to the ministry is patent to all; for she has, in

God's hands, been the means of the conversion of many.'

The bishop bowed his head, but made no remark.

John, resuming the narrative of Bessy's life where it had been dropped when the subject of the ministry of women was discussed, said :

'So passed the early days of her widowhood, in being good and doing good.'

'But,' said the curate, 'if it is granted that she had a right to speak, do you think it was wise? She was a widow, with no one to help or care for her home; and we know the world to be censorious.'

'I don't read that any one said anything about Anna when she spoke in the temple about Jesus, nor though she proclaimed Him to all who looked for His coming at Jerusalem. I don't suppose Bessy ever thought of that, I mean of people talking about her; indeed, she had no time to trouble herself as to what people said, for she worked hard. The boys were growing up, and must be bound to some trade or other soon. Both were sent to an adjoining town. In less than a year Dick, the youngest, fell into a consumption, and died very soon after he was brought home to his mother. It was a sad trial to the poor thing; but the boy died in faith. He was laid in the churchyard by the side of his young father, and again the patient woman went her way.

'One morning, a few years after the death of Dick, it was noticed that the window shutters of Bessy's cottage were not opened at the usual time, and that no smoke rose from her chimney. Her neighbours

thought she had gone to see her remaining son, who had not been over for a long time. This was mentioned to me. I knew it to be the day on which she held her class, and felt certain that she would not have gone away without having made some arrangement for its conduct. So I ran home for my wife, and together we went to the cottage. I knocked at the door, and called aloud, "Are you in?" Then we heard her voice, it came from her bedroom: "I am ill; try to get in through the window." This I soon did, and unbarred the door to admit my wife, who hastened upstairs, where she found the poor woman stricken down with rheumatic fever. She had not been very well the past few days, but hoped soon to be better. However, she found it impossible to put her feet to the floor that morning, though she had tried again and again, as a woman of her energetic nature would. "Don't cry for me, Ellen," she said to my wife; "I am in the Master's hands, living or dying; it is right."

'When the doctor saw her, he told her that it would be a long time before she would be able to do anything. She shed tears, saying, "If it had been the Lord's will, I would have liked not to trouble anybody. What will be best to do now that the Lord has taken from me both my hands and my feet?" "Your son has been sent for, Mrs. Ratcliffe," the doctor said. So in the course of the next day he came, and made arrangements with a woman to live with his mother. Bessy had £10 in the Savings Bank. This her son placed in the hands of the woman who came to live with her, saying, "Take

care of my mother ; and when that is done, I will send or bring more." But he never did. He wrote to his mother once ; that was the last she heard of or from him. I believe she felt this more than anything. She used to cry quietly when no one was about her, poor body, and pray to see him once more. I think myself that he must have taken it in his head suddenly to go abroad. No one knew. Then, he might have been wrecked, or something of the sort. Any way, the poor mother was left, as far as he was concerned, destitute and alone. But she never lost her confidence in God, never ; but is always happy, and always full of faith in the promises of God. That is all there is to tell, I think, Sir,' said John, rising from his seat.

'How does this woman live ?' said the bishop.

'The parish allows her a trifle, and the friends about send her something often. Miss Rose and the master send her something regularly every week.'

'I am much interested in her, and would very much like to help her. May I give you a trifle for her ?' the bishop said, putting his hand into his pocket.

'Thank you a hundred thousand times, Sir,' said John, as his fingers closed over two bright sovereigns. 'You will do her a world of good. May the Lord repay you !'

And touching his forehead respectfully, he left the room, and hastened to the cottage of the old saint, who gave thanks to God, and prayed the blessing of the Lord might rest on the good man who had remembered her. Does any one ask why God suffered His servant who loved Him, and had served Him so well, to be

alone in this feeble state of health, unable to rise from her bed without assistance, living upon the charity of others, and feeling that, when she died, strangers must close her eyes and lay her in her narrow bed? Let us hear what the venerable woman herself says about it; for these questions had been put to her.

‘I am never lonely, never. Jesus is ever with me, so near at times that I almost hear Him speak. And this room is full of glory. In the darkest and longest night I feel there is a guard of angels here. Sometimes I fancy I hear the rustle of their wings. Yes, I suffer; I suffer greatly; I don’t know why; I don’t ask why. He knows, and I know that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I know the Lord is righteous; I know that in faithfulness He hath afflicted me. Yes, I live on charity, if you like to put it so. But my Father says the silver and the gold are His, and that the earth, with its fulness, belongs to Him; so, if He chooses to send me the things He knows I need, instead of letting me earn them myself, it is right. He has undertaken to provide for me, and He is faithful That has promised. What if strangers must close my eyes, and strange hands lay me in the grave? My Father will be there. He has said, when I pass through the valley and shadow of death He will be there. He will watch my failing flesh and sinking heart. I am not afraid. Then, as to who puts me in my grave, some one will be sure to do that. And God will see where I lie, and know where to find me when the last trumpet will sound.’

That is the experience of this old and tried servant of God, and will be the experience of all who put their trust in Him.

Some few days passed. The rector was in his study, with the letter-bag lying before him, with a smile on his face. He walked across the room, and, opening the casement, called to his 'man,' who was busy mowing the grass-plot. On John's entering the room, his master said :

'The bishop has sent you the book he promised ; and I see he has, with his own hand, written your name ; and he has also, as you will be pleased to know, sent you his portrait.'

It need not be said how grateful John was for this mark of goodwill from so distinguished a personage as the bishop, or that both book and portrait were highly prized. In the course of the morning Mr. St. Gregory called at the Rectory, and was informed by his superior of the bishop's present to John.

'Did he mention the appointment I was so wishful to obtain ?' said the curate, rudely ignoring the rector's observations.

'Yes, he desired me to say that he has given the appointment to another man.'

The young man coloured painfully, and retired, crest-fallen and angry. The good bishop never forgot either John or Bessy Ratcliffe's strong faith in God.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### ROSE CLEMENT'S LOVERS.

Love is not to be bought—'tis of the soul,  
The noblest element, the spirit bond  
That links the angel with humanity.

**I** WONDER such a nice girl as Rose does not get married,' says one of my young lady readers. I can only say that she could have been married, if she had liked; as I believe could almost any woman, did she choose. If my fair friend will go with me for a few minutes, she will see Rose's lovers.

Rose is busy this morning. Very neat and pretty she looks, nevertheless, in her soft cambric robe, with faultless collar and cuffs, and one small spray of scented verbena in her bosom. There is a basket containing scissors, needles, and different-coloured wools, as well as several pairs of socks belonging to the rector, by her side. These are the things Rose is busy with. Yes, she is engaged in the very unpoetical but most necessary occupation of darning stockings. And let me here say that it is my opinion that no girl, be she the child of a rich man or a poor man, should be ignorant of the art—for it is an art—of mending a sock, or putting in a neat patch, as well as keeping in their place buttons and tapes.

Rose put aside the pair she had finished, and was about to take up another, when Mr. St. Gregory was announced.

'Take a seat, Mr. St. Gregory,' said Rose, herself still standing. 'But papa is not in this moment. Had you not better call again?' This she said, not wishing to be alone with the curate, for she had seen unmistakable signs of his admiration of her, and would much rather his visits were made to her father than to herself.

'Pardon me, Miss Clement, my visit is not to the rector; I have but this minute left him in the shrubbery. He is aware of my call. A—a—permit me to place you a chair,' he said, proceeding to do so.

'Thank you,' Rose answered coldly: 'I shall go to my own seat in the window.' This she did, and waited to hear, as she already guessed the object of the curate's visit.

The young man, in his most elaborate manner, commenced to say:

'Er—I trust you will not think me presumptuous, Miss Clement, when I say that I love you! and, as I think you must have seen, have loved you from my first coming here.'

If he expected Rose to be fluttered or nervous, or anything that a well-bred and self-possessed young lady ought not to be, he was mistaken. Rose looked the young man in the face, as she said, in very kindly tones,

'I am very sorry to hear that, Mr. St. Gregory. It is a pity you did not at first check the feeling. You must do so.'

'But,' said he, 'I hoped—I still hope—that you will accept of my love, and in time learn to love me.'

'Again, I can only say I am sorry, for I am sure I shall not do either of the things you mention.'

'Do not say so, Miss Clement,' he urged, 'pray do not. I came here with your father's permission to speak to you, and now offer myself, hand and heart.'

'I suppose I ought to be flattered,' Rose answered; 'but, indeed, I am not. And though I am sorry to pain you, if pain you it does, I must at once and for ever decline your proposal.'

It did pain him. It wounded his vanity; for he fancied he had only to speak, and Rose would at once say, 'Yes.'

That was Rose's first offer.

There is to be a school feast in the grounds of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who, with his family, is an attendant at the parish church. Both the sons and daughters had entered into the affair with all their hearts: Ada, a girl of Rose's own age, and a fellow-teacher in the school, with her brother Will, who lived at home to superintend the farming of the estate, especially so.

'Rose,' said Ada, 'come round the back of the garden. I want to speak to you.' Linking her arm in that of her friend, the girls went together.

'What is it, Ada?' Rose asked.

'Well, Rosey, darling, you know how much poor Will likes you! O, Rose, what a little story-teller you are! You do know!'—this to a shake of the head from Rose—'and, darling, Will means to propose to you to-day.'

'Will is rich, Rosey,' continued the good-natured girl, 'and could give you all sorts of nice things. Such silk dresses and furs! And would make you so happy! And we should all be so glad if you will take him, dear! And here is Will, so I will leave you.'

'Don't, don't, Ada! it is not kind.'

But Ada had gone, and Will—big, good-natured Will—was at her side.

'I am so glad to meet you, Miss Clement; I want to speak to you,' he said, coming up to her.

'You can speak without being so near to me,' she said. 'Stand there; don't come any nearer. What is it you want, Will? Tell me, quickly; I want to go away from here.'

'Rose,' he said, calling her by that name for the first time, 'Rose, I want you to be my wife. Look here,' he said, 'there isn't a thing that you shall not have. I will give you lots of money, and you shall go and see all the old women about the country if you like. And you shall kill your own beef and make gallons of soup for them, and do whatever you like, if you will have me, dear,' he said, in his earnestness going nearer.

He had spoken so rapidly that Rose could not make a reply. Now she said:

'Thank you, Will, very much. You are a good man, and deserve a good wife; but, you know, I don't love you.'

'Not one little bit, Rose?—a very little?'

'No, Will; I like you very much as Ada's brother, and that sort of thing; but I cannot be your wife with such a love as that. It would be awful—wicked.'

He did not speak for a moment. Presently he said—

‘Think of it, dear, darling Rose.’

‘I could not, indeed, Will! If you will like me as Herbert does, I’——

‘Rose, Rose!’ poor Will cried, ‘love me different to that!’

‘I cannot, Will; indeed, I cannot! Shake hands with me, Will, and let us be friends.’

But poor, honest Will burst into a flood of tears, as he wrung her hands and left her.

That was Rose’s second offer.

In the village lived, and regularly attended the parish church, a dapper young dealer in silks, merinoes, and other small vanities and necessities of life. To the infinite surprise of Rose Clement, one afternoon this young man was seen coming towards the Rectory in a state of high finish as to tie, hat, and gloves. ‘Something amiss with some of the clothing club tickets, I suppose,’ she thought, as a maid opened the door of the room where Rose sat.

‘Good afternoon, Mr. Sarcenet,’ she said, as he stood bowing. ‘Will you sit down?’

He again bowed, and took the seat nearest the door, pushing his feet as far back as he could without falling on his face. So sitting, he balanced his hat on his thumbs and looked foolish. It seemed as if his tongue were glued to his mouth, and a speech that he had been preparing for the last few days passed out of his mind, to use his own expression, ‘as clean as a whistle.’

Rose looked at him, as she said, 'What is it you have called about, Mr. Sarcenet?'

'Well, Miss,' he said, and paused.

'Yes?' said Rose, hoping he would go on, not for one moment guessing the object of his visit.

'That is just what I want you to say, Miss,' he cried, letting fall the hat and springing to his feet. 'If you will only say, "Yes," I will make you so happy!'

'O, he has gone mad!' said Rose, laying her hand on the bell with the intention of ringing it, when he advanced towards the table that stood between them, and said:

'Don't ring, please, not till I have told you what I came to say. I have fallen in love with you, and will make you my wife honourably if you will only say the word, Miss.'

Rose's face became scarlet. Drawing herself to her full height, she said:

'You strangely forget yourself, Sir. If my father were here, he'—

'O, never mind the old man,' he cried; 'it is you I want. Will you say the word?'

'Will you leave this house? You insult me!'

At that moment Rose caught sight of John's face, as he passed over the grass plot. She raised her hand to him, and he was with her in a moment.

'John,' she said, 'will you please see this person through the garden gate?' So saying, she turned to her seat more disturbed than she cared to acknowledge.

Mr. Sarcenet was crestfallen, and followed John without further comment. When outside the house, he said :

‘I say, but she’s a proud one ; she is so !’

‘Who do you mean by “she ?”’ said John, briefly.

‘I mean her,’ replied Mr. Sarcenet, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder towards the Rectory.

‘Miss Clement !’ exclaimed John, in surprise. ‘Why, she is the kindest, nicest lady that I ever saw.’

‘Well, I simply put a question to her, and she was as short as she possibly could be to me ; and I am sure I am as good as she is.’

Sheer astonishment took John’s breath. ‘Bless my heart,’ he said, ‘you don’t mean that you have been saying any word of love to her?’

‘I made her an offer, honourable and’—

At this John burst into a laugh, and eyed the poor lad from top to toe, as he said :

‘Well, well, I wonder when the height of impudence will be reached. I really do wonder at you. Here’s the gate. You had better come on a different errand next time you come to the Rectory.’

That was Rose Clement’s third offer. Very many things sore and trying came before Rose had another ; but she had, and accepted, the fourth, as we may probably see before this story is quite completed. What did the rector say, when Rose said she had refused the curate ? He said, ‘I am very glad indeed.’ She told him of Will’s offer, and he said, ‘Poor old Will, I like him very much. But you did right,

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Rose; Will is rather too rough for you, dear.' At Mr. Sarcenet's proposal he laughed, and said, 'Well, well, dear Rose, he must have thought much of you. Take it as a compliment. I hope you did not snub the man, because, you know, if a man loves a woman, he has a right to tell her so, even if she refuse him.'



## CHAPTER XIV.

### HOW THINGS WERE DONE A FEW YEARS AGO.

Go, labour on ; spend, and be spent,  
Thy joy to do the Father's will.  
It is the way the Master went ;  
Should not the servant tread it still ?

Go, labour on ; 'tis not for nought,  
Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain.  
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not ;  
The Master praises ; what are men ?

BONAR.

THAT was the burden of John's song one fine evening. After the labour of the day was over, he was seen to go down the shady lane that led to the little chapel, where he sometimes officiated as the preacher for the day, sometimes as the prayer-leader, and once every week as the society class-leader. In each of these offices the man was thoroughly appreciated by old and young. It was not, however, to either of these meetings he was now going, but to a Temperance meeting, where it was understood a stranger would speak, as well as several of the well-known supporters of the Temperance cause ; and, as the handbills have already announced, Mr. John Carr would take the chair.

After the usual preliminaries were gone through, the

chairman commenced by saying, 'I am here to-night because I feel the great need there is to try to put a stop to the use of intoxicating drink. I can do little myself; for I am, as you all know, a plain man, and a working man, as, with few exceptions, are all here to-night. But when I see the mischief wrought by the drinking customs of the day, when I read of murder done by men who were under the influence of liquor, when I hear of the hundreds that fill workhouses, prisons, hospitals, and galleys, the hundreds more that live in the most squalid poverty, and other hundreds that, but for the use of wine and beer, would be wealthy and honourable members of society, my heart trembles within me. I know I can do little; but it is my happiness to wish and, as I can, work against it. I have myself tasted nothing stronger than water, except tea, for twenty years. I give no strong drink to any one, I do not keep it in my house, and whenever it is in my power I speak against it as an enemy to be guarded against; and I am here to make my protest against it in every form. I have a pledge-book in my pocket, and at the close of this meeting I shall be glad to wait with others to receive the names of those who will join the Temperance ranks.'

John now formally introduced to the meeting the Rev. Caleb Kingstone, who was not so well received as John had been; 'For,' said some of the people, 'we know what *he* is, and that's a real good one.'

The gentleman was no longer young. He had been very handsome; but now his dark hair and beard were silvered over by the hand of time, though none of the

dignity of his appearance was lost by that circumstance. He alluded to what John had said about individual effort, and, turning to him, said, 'I am proud to be here to-night to give such aid as another man can give to the Temperance cause existing in Rednall. Like yourself, I am here to help to put an end to the drinking customs of the age.'

'But,' said a coarse-looking man in the body of the chapel, 'you are paid for coming here.'

'I beg your pardon for contradicting you, Sir, but I am not,' said the speaker. 'I am a minister of the Gospel. I preached yesterday a few miles from this place; to-day I came on to this village to give the Temperance cause a little help.'

The people would have put the man who interrupted him out, but the speaker was not at all disconcerted by the remarks, and said, 'Let him alone; he may have something else to say. Have you, my friend? If not, I shall proceed to speak to the people who are willing to listen to me.'

'You can talk away,' the man said, 'for all I care. You are well paid, I'll be bound. You make a good thing by your preaching, I know.'

The gentleman stepped to the front of the platform, and said, 'May I be forgiven if, for five minutes, I speak of myself?'

In a moment there is a cry of, 'Go on, Sir, go on.'

He began: 'When I was fourteen years of age, I was put apprentice to a good trade, one I liked, too, and so took pleasure in learning. Before I was quite out of my apprenticeship, I was convinced of sin, and gave my

heart to God, and joined myself to God's people. There was a good deal to bear from the workmen in the shop at that time : but God helped me to be patient and go on in the way to heaven. There were fewer preachers in those days than there are now. One good brother had fallen sick, and could not go to the place he was appointed to preach at. I was requested to go and try to speak to the people, for they were anxious to hear the Word of God. Of course, you remember I was quite a boy ; but I did not refuse to go, lest I should sin against God. It pleased Him that day to bring a young man about my own age to Himself. With a glad heart I went home, and told the minister who had sent me the good news ; he clasped his hands together as he cried, "Thanks be to God, Who has owned your labour ! You must follow it up. God will do more yet by you. Be faithful." As soon as my time with my master was out, I was desired to enter into the ministry, and go out as a travelling preacher. My master said it was madness. "You will ruin your prospects for life," he said. "Don't be foolish, I will make it worth your while to stay with me." I do not doubt he would have done so ; and if I had stayed, I should have been a prosperous, perhaps rich, man to-day, instead of being a Methodist preacher without anything except my conscience and will to do good.

'Now, I will show you what inducements I had to become a preacher. When I was sent out, my first circuit gave me the magnificent salary of £14 a year. I was allowed four meals each day, that were to cost fourpence-halfpenny each. I found a place where I

could sleep for one shilling a week, providing I slept with two little boys. The children were pretty quiet, and I, as a rule, very tired; so I managed to rest, if I did not always sleep. Then the journeys to the various places were long, for the most part, roads were bad, and a man whose meals are to cost only a few pence is not quite calculated for toilsome journeys. I think my good friend who spoke of my being well paid also said mine was an idle life. Let me assure any one who thinks so that it is a mistake, and ask you to suppose yourself to have some Sunday morning a journey of, say, from five to fifteen miles before you, before you reach the place you have to preach at. The people are waiting; you must commence at once, and get through the service. At its close some one *may* say, "Will you come with me to dinner?" or they *may not*, and, like John Wesley and his friend, you may dine on blackberries, if there are any, or you may do without. You may sit on the roadside, or you may walk about the fields till it is time to preach again, when you have to resume your work, finish, and walk back. I have had that to do. I have more than once dined on wild apples, with a drink of water from the wayside well, not looking for, expecting, or getting any tea until I reached my home. I have been on the road till midnight. More than that, there was one place, that I preached twice at, from which it was impossible to reach my home until three o'clock on Monday. That is not very idle, is it? I don't know any man who works harder than a Methodist preacher, if he does his duty.

‘You will wonder that, under such circumstances, men like myself ever married. I did so, and am thankful that God gave me the dear, good woman who helped me to bear the toil, and bore up so bravely herself till better days came, as come they have to many. When I took my wife to my new circuit, I found a small cottage that bore the name of “the Preacher’s House.” In this house there was £12 worth of furniture not paid for. My wife and myself set to work to get the money. Must I tell you how? We had to beg it. There was no clock in the house, and watches were not so plentiful as now. A man had a clock to sell for £1; but how to get £1 was a difficulty. “Let us have a meeting,” said my wife; “perhaps we may get twenty shillings to pay for it.” We acted upon her advice, and had the meeting, and had what was considered an overflowing collection; but it was one shilling short of the price of the clock. However, the owner was good to us, and allowed us to have the article for nineteen shillings. Then, indeed, we considered ourselves well off. Time would fail to tell of all the straits we were put to, or the hard battle we had to get along at all; how even our narrow salaries were not always forthcoming; how the preachers were last paid. If there were other expenses, they were met first, and more than once the preacher could get nothing at all. You, my friend, who tell me that I am idle and luxurious, can, perhaps, tell us where all this comes in. I have given my story in as few words as I well could. It is but the story of most of the early

Methodist ministers. Yet there is not one of us who regrets having given our life and prospects to the cause of Christ.'

There is a burst of applause, as the gentleman finishes this recital of his early life in God's cause.

When the applause that had followed Mr. Kingstone's remarks was over, the chairman stood up, and, looking down on the impertinent fellow who had interrupted the speaker, said: 'I can scarcely say I am sorry that you have behaved so badly, Tom Brown, except for your own sake; for it has given us the opportunity of hearing a very touching story.'

In a very short time the rude fellow with the red face began again to interrupt the speaker, making similar rude remarks. John said something in a low voice to Mr. Kingstone, and quietly left the platform, going towards the place where the man sat. As he saw John approach, he stood up, thus giving him the advantage he sought. John, in an instant, threw his sinewy arms about the other's waist, lifted him bodily, and carried him out of the chapel.

Order was now restored, and the meeting proceeded with. It would take too much time to chronicle the addresses of the various speakers, or to give an account of the many who took the pledge at the close; but in something over an hour's time John was heard, as he passed in the darkness up the lane that led to his house, singing,

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow.

**A very sad task lies before us in penning the future**

pages of this story. A dark cloud hangs over the principal characters, some of whom we shall now look upon once again. And, as a prelude to the next chapter, will my readers please understand nearly three years to have passed since we first looked upon Rednall Rectory ?



## CHAPTER XV.

### FOREBODINGS.

Ingratitude ! thou marble-hearted fiend !  
More hideous, when thou showest in a child,  
Than the sea monster !

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Reverend Richard Clement, under his calm and dignified exterior, carried a sorrowful heart. A letter had been received from the tutor of St. Michael's, complaining of the reckless conduct of Hubert. Rose wept sadly when her father read this letter to her ; but when she saw how his hands shook, and his lips quivered, and the heavy, sobbing sighs escaped from his full heart, she dried her eyes, and, crossing to where he sat, with bowed head, she said :

‘Now, dear papa, let us hope for the best. Hubert has not been steady, we know ; but the long vacation will soon be here, and he always is better when he is at home for a little while. It is the company, you see, that draws him away. Don't look so sad, dear ; let me remind you of one of your own sermons, framed on the words of Elihu to his afflicted friend Job : “Now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds.” Did you not tell us that, as we waited, the darkness passed, that the white edge began to creep up, and presently the sun burst forth, the bright light

that had been obscured by the rain asserted itself; and as the birds sang and the rain washed, flowers lifted their sweet eyes towards heaven, the heavy and darkening cloud was forgotten; and that it had been a blessing, though it was too dark to see through at the time?’

‘Thank you, dear Rose, for reminding me of it. But O, my child, if you only knew how dense this is to me! I hoped for so much, and am so bitterly disappointed, that my heart is well-nigh broken!’

‘Hush! papa; you must not say that. Hubert was all a boy could be, whilst under your roof. Don’t blame yourself. Let us hope and pray that this long stay with us may cure him of his bad habits.’

‘May God, in His infinite mercy, grant it,’ said the father, folding his hands reverently, ‘and give us grace and strength for what there is yet to come!’

‘Yes, papa, we will look for that; we shall do nothing without God’s help.’

‘No, Rose, nothing; but God is our refuge and strength.’

‘The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,’ Rose whispered, kissing his cheek; ‘and now, dear, go out and have a chat with John, and tell him as much or as little as you think.’

In about a week after the conversation just given, Hubert wrote to say he should be with them on a given day. The low carriage was sent to meet him, John driving. Rose was at the open window, waiting; for she loved her brother dearly, notwithstanding his many faults. As she heard the sound of the carriage

wheels on the gravel walk, she cried, 'Here he is, papa,' and flew to the hall door to welcome him. Hubert sprang to his feet, and kissed his sister, as he asked :

'Well, Rosy, how are you? and how are the ducks and chickens, and the old women's rheumatisms, and the old men's coughs? and, O, I forgot, how is the pater?'

'You had better come in and ask papa yourself,' she answered, with a low sigh, that was lost on her brother; for he had turned to the man who was helping John with his luggage, and, with an oath, bade him take care of his gun.

The rector gave his boy a loving welcome, notwithstanding the heartache he had caused him. When dinner, for which they had waited Hubert's arrival, was over, and the table cleared, Mr. Clement asked :

'How are you classed, Hubert? how did the examination pass off?'

'I don't know,' he answered, lighting a cigar; 'I only know I am not classed at all myself. You see,' he went on to say, 'there are a lot of fellows there that do nothing but grind—grind—all day, so that a man has no chance of getting a good place in the lists at all.'

'Not unless he work, too, of course,' the rector answered; 'and that, it appears, you have not done.'

'Not very much, I confess,' Hubert answered, coldly. 'There is no need that I should.'

'Papa would have dearly liked you to stand well in your college,' Rose said; 'I am very much disappointed, Hubert.'

'Sorry for that,' he answered, lazily; 'but what's done can't be undone. Really, though, what's the good of a man killing himself, even to gratify any one's whim? for it is only a whim.'

Seeing a look of grave displeasure on his father's face, Hubert, in a more conciliatory voice, said:

'I am nearly of age, and then the Drowich property becomes my own. My agent assures me there is quite £3,000 to the good.'

The rector acknowledged that it was so, and remarked how large a sum it was, and advised its investment until such time as it might be required.

Taking up the expression then pretty often used by many persons, Hubert said:

'Would you be surprised to hear that I want it now?'

'I should, indeed; surprised and sorry.'

'Then I am afraid you will have to be, for I am in the hands of a sharp sort of fellow, who will claim'——.

'Surely, surely, Hubert, you have not borrowed money on the Drowich estate? You could not,' said the rector, sorrowfully.

'I both could and have, I assure you,' he said, with the utmost indifference, tilting his chair back, and slowly smoking.

'Take care, Hubert, that the old place that your mother prized so highly does not pass from your hands. Remember your aunt Janet's express desire that you suffered no stranger ever to take possession of Drowich.'

'No fear of that,' Hubert replied.

The rector rose and left the room, grieved and sad.

A day or two after, when the dinner bell rang, Hubert was not ready.

‘I shall soon be down,’ he said, ‘don’t wait.’

When, at length, he did make his appearance, his father saw that his face was flushed and his speech heavy. He then knew his son had been drinking somewhere or other.

As the servant, according to custom, was about to fill his glass with beer, the rector said:

‘Mr. Hubert looks hot; I dare say he would like water.’

The girl saw what her master meant at once, and carried the beer to the sideboard.

Hubert was silent until the servant left the room. Then he said, with mock humility:

‘Since I am not allowed to have any beer, you will not, I suppose, object to my taking a little wine?’

‘I would rather you did not to-day,’ said the rector, calmly.

‘You take wine yourself; why attempt to stop me?’

‘If you took no more than I do, I should not stop you. I have never in my life taken wine or anything else to make me as unsteady as you are now, Hubert.’

‘No, perhaps not; but you see you are a model man,’ he said, with a sneer on his lip.

As he spoke, he drew the decanter towards himself, and, half filling a tumbler with port wine, drank it off at one draught.

Without further remark, the rector rose and placed the bottle in the sideboard, locked it up, and put the key in his pocket.

‘Not very polite of you, I must say. I did not intend to take any more. You need not be afraid, Sir.’

‘I am afraid, Hubert, more than I can say.’

The rector, like many other parents, thought his son would do like himself—to use the well-worn phrase, ‘either take a glass or leave it alone.’ Now he saw that he could not, and that he did not stop at one or many glasses. The path of ‘temperance’ was not the safe path for Hubert. *Total abstinence* alone was the safe one. From that day Mr. Clement banished from his table all intoxicating liquors; but Hubert had commenced the downward course, was descending swiftly, and in all the years to come did the Reverend Richard Clement regret that one indulgence.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### FILLED WITH HIS OWN WAYS.

He transgresseth yet again, and falleth little by little,  
Till the ground crumble beneath him, and he sinketh into the gulf.

TUPPER.

**H**UBERT CLEMENT went to his room soon after the scene just described. He threw off his shoes, and changed his dress for a shooting suit, selecting a pair of strong boots and a cap that could be tied over his ears. He sat down and waited until he heard his father's bedroom closed; and by that he learned that all the house was still, for it was the master's invariable custom to lock up all doors as soon as the servants had retired. Stealthily leaving his room, quietly creeping down the old stairs, and avoiding anything that might cause him to stumble or make the least noise, Hubert made his way. Soon he found himself in a wide passage that led to the back door of the house, which opened into the wide yard. On one side of this yard were the stables; in the centre a clump of evergreens, some of them said to be of very ancient date. Hubert silently unlocked the door and let himself out. For a moment he stood in the shadow of the trees, as if to assure himself that all was still within; then turned and passed out into the open road, where he was joined

by two other men, one of whom hailed him at once with—

‘What a deuce of a time you have been! Thought you did not intend to come. Have you brought the I.O.U.?’

‘Yes.’

‘Very well, then, I have the tin.’

Together the three walked to a low house, about a mile away, where Hubert and the men, who were disreputable characters, and ready to pander to the unhappy youth’s vices—love of drink and gambling—spent the greater part of the night.

It happened that one of the rector’s horses was sick, and the veterinary surgeon had left medicine to be given at stated times. It was John’s duty to see to it. For this purpose he had made his way to the stables just as the stars were beginning to fade. He had attended to the wants of the sick animal, and was returning home, when his ear caught the sound of footsteps on the gravel walk. Stepping into the shade of the laurels, he waited to see who the intruder was, before he spoke to him. To his surprise and sorrow, he beheld his young master, evidently very tipsy, but able to remove the heavy boots he wore, undo the door fastening, and let himself in. John listened until he heard the lock turned; then he came out into the open space, where he could see the young man’s window. Presently he saw him open a part of the casement, as if he were too warm; then, knowing him to be safe in his own room, John slowly turned away, with a sad heart, and full of perplexity. ‘The master must know



of this,' he said to himself. 'It would be cruel to hide it, for nobody knows where it may end. God help him to bear it; for it will be a heavy blow, I fear.'

The rector, when it was day, walked down to the stable to inquire about the horse. John told him what he had seen. It was very pitiful to see the good man's sorrow; his face became white as death.

'What must I do?' he said. 'How can I put a stop to it?'

'I should suggest that you carry the keys with you when you go to your room at night, Sir.'

'That I really will, and see to my door being safe.'

'And don't you think, Sir, that it is time to cut the pear tree down that is under Mr. Hubert's window, and let me put some ivy to run up in its place?' John asked, looking into his master's face.

The rector saw his meaning, and said:

'Yes, John, get it cut down to-day, please.'

'And, master,' said the servant, in respectful tones, 'it won't do to forget the Lord reigns.'

'No, no, John; it would be sad, indeed, were it otherwise.'

The keys were taken to the master's room, the many-branched pear tree removed, and the ivy planted. Hubert made no remark, good or bad; still, there were evidences of his being out at night.

He would not bear reproof. His sister he laughed at, and called her 'little Puritan;' John, 'a miserable fanatic;' and his father, 'a pompous old fool.' On one occasion, when Mr. Clement remonstrated with his son,

he told the dismayed man that he had quite given up the ridiculous notion of believing in the Bible.

From this time there was an estrangement between the father and son. They dined together, and conversed on ordinary things; but they were never the same as formerly. About this time it was noticed that Hubert drank less, and seemed to take interest in the grounds; for he walked out much, though he always carefully avoided meeting John, for which both his father and sister were sorry, for they remembered the good the faithful man might do him if allowed. One day he asked his sister if she would lend him £10. Rose could not; she had not any such sum. When she asked him why he required it, he bade her mind her own business, and not meddle in things that did not concern her. He was, however, in a strait, from some cause or other not told to her; and the consequence was another, and larger, draw from a money-lender on the Drowich property. This came to his father's ears through the means of the landlord of the house where the business was transacted, who felt it right to see Mr. Clement, though, he said, 'I know it will be against myself.'

The rector spoke to his son, making one more appeal, begging him to think before it was too late.

'If you do not,' he said, 'you will be a beggar in a few years.'

'No fear,' was the light response, as Hubert turned out of the house.

The father sighed deeply as he asked himself,

'What will the end be?'

## CHAPTER XVII.

ELLA.

Thou whose locks outshine the sun,  
Golden tresses wreathed in one,  
As the braided streamlets run,

Standing with reluctant feet,  
Where the brook and river meet,  
Womanhood and childhood fleet,

O thou child of many prayers !  
Life hath quicksands—life hath snares !

LONGFELLOW.

JOHN CARR'S home was in the rectory grounds, though not in sight of the house itself—a comfortable and well-kept home. Though no wife was at its head, yet the order of the place was remarkable. The chairs and tables shone with bees'-wax and hard rubbing ; the long dresser, with its nest of shelves over, might have served for a mirror ; no speck of dust rested on its highly-polished surface, or on the curious-looking plates and dishes that were ranged with precision in three tiers. In the middle were two portraits, side by side. The first is that of the venerable Hugh Bourne ; there is the closely-shut mouth, the keen eyes, the prominent nose, whiskerless face, and straight hair—no doubt about its being in 'its natural form'—with the lines of thought and care so well remembered by some, no

longer young. The other face is younger, smoother, fuller; there is a more open brow, partly produced by nature, partly by boldness; a little whisker adorns each side of the face, the comfortable-looking chin rests on a white neckerchief, similar to that which enfolds the throat of the less robust Hugh Bourne; either of these kerchiefs, in their own proper material, muslin or lawn, containing as much as would make, at the least, a score of the 'ties' now used by ministers of all classes. The owner of this face is William Clowes, the fellow-labourer of Bourne, and with him the joint founder of Primitive Methodism. To whom all honour! as well as to the holy men and women who aided them in what they believed to be right, and were of the little company, of whose work some one in after days wrote:

The little crowd increases still,  
Which arose upon Mow-hill.

Lines without much merit, as to poetry, but containing a truth which the world is compelled to acknowledge, though the founders' names and faces are not, *as yet*, engraven in brass or marble.

Ella was the presiding genius of this home, and took her hapless young mother's place well, though so young herself. She was at that time just seventeen years old; a very beautiful girl, with a sweet, Madonna-like face, blue eyes, shaded by silken lashes, fair complexion, with a slight rose tint on each cheek, and small rosy mouth. She had a large quantity of fair, bright hair, that waved and rippled without any foreign aid, and fell on each side of her pretty head, where it was caught loosely up

by a bright ribbon, and from thence fell below her waist; and well this modest style became her sweet face. Ella was not, as are many really pretty country girls, awkward, or hoydenish; there was a quiet grace in her movements, and gentleness in her manner, rarely seen in girls of Ella's class. Both her beauty and her neatness were inherited from her mother. Her manner of dressing was a source of envy to many of the village girls, though Ella's dresses were chiefly of printed cotton; they were well made and well fitting, as well as carefully put on; and if girls did but consider it, this is the real secret of looking 'nice.' Ella's Sunday hat was coarse straw, her gloves were only thread, and her boots were thick; but all were neat, fresh, and clean. Having no mother or sister, Ella's time would have hung heavy on her hands when her household duties were over, if she had not been fond of books. She had read and re-read all her father's stock of books. The lives of good men and women of early Methodism were familiar to her. A copy of Mungo Park's *Travels*, and a few similar volumes, she had made herself acquainted with. The narratives and histories of Scripture had formed the substance of many conversations between the father and daughter. That, with an occasional newspaper and a monthly magazine, was all that fell in the way of the girl, so far as her worthy parent knew. He was, however, startled one day, when he returned to his home unexpectedly, to see Ella thrust under the cushion of a chair one of the many yellow-backed books to be seen in all booksellers' shops, bookstalls, and railway stations.

John looked in amazement at his daughter, who coloured painfully, as he said, 'Do you hide things from your father, my dear? What is it you have put under the cushion? I could take it and see for myself, but I won't, because I hope you will show it to me yourself. There is only you and me left; let there be no secrets between us, my child. I have none from you,' he added, tenderly.

'Don't think I meant to be deceitful, father,' Ella answered; 'but I did not think you would care for me to read this,' she said, as she took the book from its hiding-place, and placed it in his hands.

It was one of Mrs. Reckless' wildest novels.

John closed the volume, as he asked, 'You thought I should not like you to read it?'

'Yes, father.'

'Then my little blossom should have loved her old father more than to do anything she *thought* he would not approve,' he said, drawing his child to his side.

'Yes, father, I ought, and I will be more careful.'

'What is the book about?' he asked.

'I have not read much, father, and I give you my word I will not read further in it; but there is a gentleman falls in love with some one, and she is married; so the man that is in love with her asks if he shall kill her husband, and, though she does not say yes directly, she is quite willing I am sure; and——'

'That will do, Ella; I should not read any more, if I were you; such things are unlikely and untrue. The world is not what such books would show; they are likely to do you very much harm, and unsettle your

mind, till you will be tired of your home and ashamed of your father ; and don't let there be any secrets, Ella.'

The girl still lingered by her father's side. Presently she said, 'There is something I want to tell you, and I hardly like, father, lest you should think me bold and forward.'

'That, I am sure, you are not. What is it, dear?'


'Well, father, I scarcely ever go out but I meet Mr. Hubert ; and he will walk by my side and speak to me. I don't want him to do it, and I don't like it. I never say anything to him but "Yes, Sir," or "No, Sir."'

John's face became pale with emotion as he listened to Ella's story. 'What are the things he talks about?'

he asked, in calm, low tones, for he wished to know exactly what influence Hubert Clement had with his fair, and now innocent, daughter.

'O, silly, ridiculous things. He says my hair is like gold, and he wanted me to let him cut one tress to keep. Of course, I said, "No, Sir." Then he said I was fitter to be a countess than a cottage girl, and that I should grace any drawing-room. I was very sorry that you should have sent him here for the flower-seeds this morning, because I was obliged to say, "Come in, Sir," to him, and he asked me if he might come to see me again.'

All this Ella had told her father in a rapid, nervous kind of way, that prevented him from replying. Now he caught her by the hand with both his own, as he said, 'Ella, my dear, I would rather lose my right hand than put you in the way of Mr. Hubert. I send him here? He told you an untruth ; I neither would nor



did. Hubert is no credit to the house of his own father, and will bring none to any house. He must not come here ; I shall tell him so to-day. And O, my dear Ella, take care ; don't speak to him, or be seen with him, I beg and pray.'

'Don't distress yourself, father, don't,' she said, kissing his cheek ; 'I will not, you shall see.'

'Ella,' John resumed, 'do you remember the conversation we had about the bloom on the fruit, and the pattern on the wing of the butterfly ?'

'Yes, father, you showed me the finger mark on the plum, and said all the power in the world could not make the bloom perfect again. And you showed me the dust off the butterfly's wing ; it had fluttered so in your hand as to spoil the beautiful pattern. I remember very well how pitiful the poor thing seemed, with its lovely wings so marred, and that you said how impossible it was for the bright insect to be bright or beautiful any more.'

'My darling Ella,' her father said, 'a girl's good name and reputation is like that bloom on the plum, like the dust on the wing ; once destroyed, who shall restore it ?'

'Father,' cried Ella, 'what do you mean ?'

'I mean that if the tongue of slander, or whispers are once afloat about any one, especially a young girl, it is never quite forgotten, however good the after life may be. So I entreat you to beware. Do as you have said ; never speak or look at Mr. Hubert ; he is a bad man, even though he be my master's son. I would rather see you by your dead mother's side, than have



your name linked with his in the remotest degree. I am very glad you have told me this, very.'

'I will never let my name be associated with his, I know,' said Ella, with spirit; 'don't fear for me, father.' And in her heart she meant it; but, alas for the deceitfulness of sin! notwithstanding the girl's good resolves, the time was coming with hasty strides when her name would be associated with that of Hubert Clement, and she carried in her bosom a secret that finally wrought her ruin.

John sought his young master, and charged him with having told an untruth; and desired him not to go to his house any more.

'Why, may I ask?' Hubert inquired; 'I used to go without all this fuss.'

John looked him full in his eyes, as he said: 'That was three years ago, Mr. Hubert, and you were a different young man; besides, it is *my house*, and I have a right to say who shall, and who shall not, come there.'

'You don't want me, then, it is pretty clear.'

'You are right, Sir, I don't; neither does my child.'

Hubert coloured and turned away.

Ella took back the book she had borrowed, unread; and was careful to please her father in all the small details of life. Several times she had met Hubert, and had shrunk from his look of undisguised admiration; but he had not spoken to her from the day John had mentioned his visit to his cottage. But Ella, with all her fears of Hubert and her desires to be good and please her father, was conscious of an undefined loss from the time Hubert had not spoken to her. Her

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heart beat a little quicker when she saw him, and there was a vague feeling of disappointment when he had passed her without speaking. She knew it was not right; and yet she had got into a habit of looking out of the cottage window in the direction of the Rectory gardens. If she saw Hubert, she was glad. She knew she ought not so to watch and be glad if she did happen to see him, and yet—Yet what, Ella? What about the bloom on the fruit? What about the delicate tracery on the wing of the butterfly? What of your father's entreaty, that you would neither look at nor speak to Hubert Clement? What of your own promise? Better that your youthful beauty fade on the spot, better that your blue eyes become sightless, and your fair hair fall from your head, than that you should ever meet with, or speak to, the rector's handsome son any more. And yet she did; O wayward, undisciplined heart!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE STEPPING STONES : FLIGHT.

Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy crags, O sea !  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.

TENNYSON.

‘**Y**OU expect your girls to-night, Rose, as usual, I suppose,’ said Hubert Clement to his sister, as he threw the *Times* that he appeared to have been reading on the floor.

‘Yes, Hubert, so please do not come into the library as you did last week. You quite confused the girls with looking at them.’

‘All right,’ he answered, with a laugh ; ‘I won’t look at you at all.’

He did not look in, but he stationed himself at a window from which he could see every one that entered the house. One after another the girls came and went in. At last the slight figure of Ella came up the walk. Hubert’s face flushed, as he saw her, with downcast eyes, cross the threshold after the others. The sun was not yet down ; the evening was fine. Hubert stood for a few moments with his hands in his pockets, whistling a low tune. Presently he put on his hat, and went

into the garden, where he walked up and down at a short distance from the house; but not so far but that he could see all who left the door. In due time he heard the sound of feet and the voices of the girls chatting together as they left the Rectory. Ella was last. She did not go with the others, but turned round a corner of the house, to take another way home. It was a little further; but she dared not risk meeting Hubert with so many persons about, so she tripped lightly on. A small stream ran across the road she would have to pass; but there were large stones, placed at short distances from each other, for pedestrians to cross the water. When Ella reached the edge of the stream, she clasped the books she had used in the Rectory together with one hand, and, with the other, drew her skirts tightly together, that they might not touch the water as it flowed past. Stepping hastily on the stones, she would have been over at once but that she heard quick footsteps behind her. She turned sharply round to see who followed her, and beheld Hubert close by. In her confusion she slipped, and the next instant was prostrate in the stream. She was as quickly raised by the strong arms of Hubert, who sprang forward as he saw her slip from the stepping-stone into the water.

‘My books, please; my books!’ she cried, for they had fallen from her grasp in the stream.

‘I’ll get your books in a moment,’ he said. ‘Can you stand alone, or can you get across yourself?’

‘Yes, yes; please get me my books,’ she cried.

‘That’s soon done,’ Hubert answered, for he saw

that they had been caught by some brambles that hung quite over the shallow water. So he waded down to them, and, taking them up, crossed to the other side of the stream, where Ella's straw hat, that had come off when she fell, had floated into another tangle of brake and fern that grew on the bank.

'Thank you very much, Mr. Hubert,' Ella said, shily; 'I am so sorry to have troubled you.'

'And I am so glad to be troubled. I hope you are not hurt,' he asked, with a tenderness that went to the girl's heart.

'No, Sir, thanks. I will take my books, please, Mr. Hubert.'

'Ella,' he said, looking in her face, 'don't you think I deserve something for fetching your things out of the water, eh! pretty one?'

'I have nothing to give you, Sir,' she said, looking up, and reading the admiration he had of her in his face.

Ella's eyes dropped suddenly before his ardent gaze. Her face was crimson, and she trembled with a new and strange delight.

'Say you will give me one kiss, Ella,' he pleaded.

'I dare not,' she whispered; 'I dare not.'

'I, then, must dare to take one.'

'You won't be so afraid of me now, will you, Ella?' he said, as he placed the books in her hands.

'I don't know, I am sure, Sir; I am afraid——'

'I am afraid you will take cold, dear, if you don't get your wet things off; so run away, my beauty.'

Ella gave one glance into the face of the man who

had kissed her and called her 'dear.' Then she turned and hastened to her home.

'You are rather late,' John said, without lifting his eyes from the book he was reading.

In a moment or two Ella had changed her wet things for dry ones, and was hastily putting the supper on the table.

'Are you sick?' John asked, looking into her face. 'You are very pale.'

'My head aches,' she answered, without looking at him.

Ella's heart smote her, as she heard her good parent pour out his soul to God for her, that she might be kept and saved from all harm and sin. 'Let there be no secrets between us,' came to her mind. For one moment she lingered, then kissed him, and went upstairs. For the first time in her life, Ella Carr retired to her bed without praying. When she arose next morning, Hubert was first in her memory.

That same day she went down to the village to make some purchases. Again she met Hubert, and shily accepted his proffered hand, while he inquired if she had taken any cold. Hearing the sound of carriage wheels approaching, he let it fall quickly, and said, in a hurried manner,

'Be at the stepping-stones at seven.'

Ella did not refuse.

These meetings between Hubert and Ella were now frequent, and the silly girl began to think how delightful it would be to have Rose for a sister, and various other delightful fancies; and wondered what the grand

rector would say when his son should tell him that he was going to marry his servant's daughter. One afternoon she ventured to say this much to her lover. To her dismay, he told her that he dared not tell them at the Rectory; 'for,' he said, 'they would never forgive me, or look upon you.' This had never crossed the mind of Ella. Now that it did, she burst into tears, and, clinging to his arm, asked, 'What would they do, Hubert?'

'They would separate us quickly,' he answered.

'O what should I do without you?' she wept.

'You need not do without me, my little dove,' he said, with a voice as tender and soft as that of a true man when he speaks of a true and holy love to the woman he honours above all the women of the earth. 'You need not. If you will come away with me from this place at once, they cannot separate us then.'

Still the child sobbed bitterly. How dark and heavy the secret was becoming!

'Do you heed me, Ella?' he said. 'They could not part us then, could they?' he said, pressing her hands to his lips.

'No, they could not take a wife from her husband,' she said.

In a very short time after, not many days, in fact, she remembered that he started when she said that, and made no answer, but kissed away her tears.

'What would my father say?' she asked.

A look of contempt came to his face, though Ella did not see it. She was not pleased with the tone of his voice, as he said:

‘He can’t expect to keep you always, I suppose. I dare say he would be very glad to hear I had married you, though I know the old fellow does not like me.’

The girl made no reply, though she knew he would not be glad; and her heart ached sadly, as she thought of her father’s desolation if she should leave him. Hubert seemed to think what was passing her mind, and said:

‘Well, little dove, I dare say you think much more of your father than you do of me; so we must make up our minds to part, unless you wish.’

‘Let me think, Hubert! let me think, till I see you again.’

‘No,’ he said; ‘you must decide now. If you come with me, you shall be a lady, and the happiest in the world.’

She did choose—chose death rather than life. Ella was specially tender with her father that night, though she knew that on the morrow he would be a broken-hearted man, and that she would have wrought the mischief.

‘God’s blessing rest upon thee, my blossom,’ John said, as he turned to go to his room.

These were the last words she ever heard her father speak; and, as he looked back, it was the last time she ever saw his face. Ella wept sadly, and planned all sorts of good for her father, when her husband should bring her back. She did not undress, but tied on her hat, and took a small parcel, with her waterproof cloak, and softly stole downstairs, softly out of the house, and down the garden. Under the shadow of a spreading



chestnut tree stood a man, who stepped forward to meet her. Seizing her hands, he cried :

‘Come, my dove, or we shall not catch the train. See,’ he cried, ‘I have a dog-cart waiting. I got it from the “Lion,” under pretence of going to shoot in the morning very early.’

There was an express train due to call at the station that was some few miles from Rednall.

They were in time for the midnight train. There was a solitary porter in waiting. This man knew Hubert, and touched his hat respectfully. Ella he supposed to be his sister. They were booked for London, and the man thought no more about them, though he, at the time, wondered they had no luggage.

‘Nay, Ella, it is now too late to weep and wish you had not come,’ Hubert tells her. ‘The train is express, and the fact of your being out all night with me would ruin you. We must now make the best of it. Don’t cry; don’t cry; it is silly!’

## CHAPTER XIX.

### AWAKENING.

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,  
Thy tribute wave deliver ;  
No more by thee my steps shall be  
For ever and for ever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,  
A thousand moons will quiver ;  
But not by thee my steps shall be  
For ever and for ever.

TENNYSON.

THE sun threw its beams through the small-paned windows, casting the greenish colour produced by the old glass on the white-covered breakfast table, where sat the master of the house and his daughter Rose.

‘How late Hubert is!’ the rector remarked, as he helped himself to a slice of ham.

‘He is a little, papa. Will you please tell Mr. Hubert that breakfast is waiting, Mary?’ Rose said to the servant in attendance.

The girl left the room, and presently returned, saying, ‘I cannot make Mr. Hubert hear me, or else he will not answer me, Miss Rose.’

‘Never mind, Mary ; I will go up and wake him

myself,' she answered, rising and making her way to her brother's room.

In a very few minutes she returned, with a surprised face, saying,

'Hubert is not in his room, papa. He has not been in bed last night; it is just as the housemaid left it.'

The rector put down his cup with a sigh, as he said, 'Worse and worse.'

John Carr had risen at the usual hour to go to his daily work. He had rapped at the door of Ella's room as he passed, and fancied that she answered him. It was her custom to call her father to his breakfast at half-past eight. He expected to hear her voice every minute. Presently he looked at his watch; it was nine o'clock. 'She has overslept herself,' he thought, and looked towards his cottage. To his great surprise, no smoke rose from the chimney-top. 'What can be the matter?' he said, with a sudden fear, as he turned to the house. On entering his home, he is surprised to find there is no cloth laid for breakfast. There is no fire in the grate; the hearth is unswept. There is no bright face to greet him! In a moment he is in his daughter's room. The little bed is undisturbed. Evidently it has not been slept in the previous night. Trembling in every limb, the poor father hastes from room to room, crying, 'Ella! Ella!' but there is no reply. But John sees that a gate at the end, leading down to the stream we have before mentioned, is wide open. Thither he flies. Under the branches of the chestnut tree he sees something white. Stooping and taking it up, he sees it is a handkerchief, and in one

corner of it is the name of Hubert Clement. A cold chill falls upon his heart. For a moment he stands breathless, then, lifting his arm, cries, 'But I will know! I will see him this moment!'

With rapid steps he approaches the Rectory. His master is leaving the door of the breakfast-room, as John meets him, and exclaims, 'What is the matter? Are you ill?'

'Where is Mr. Hubert?' John demanded.

The rector said, pressing John's hand, 'I do not know. He has been out all night. We have seen nothing of him. Why do you look so?'

For a single instant the man looked into his master's face, then staggered and fell forward to the floor insensible.

'Run for Ella instantly, Rose,' said her father.

The girl flew rather than ran. The moment she saw the condition of the once bright cottage the sad truth showed itself to her. She looked about for any scrap of paper or any sign of Ella's whereabouts. But there is nothing. She is gone! So is her own brother! There is but one conclusion to come to—they have gone away together!

On her return she found John laid on a sofa, the rector bathing his head with water. He had gathered from him, as he returned to consciousness, that his daughter had fled from her home. Rose's face confirmed the sad news. Without a word she knelt by her father's side, as he bent over his servant's white face, and the three wept bitter tears. Why prolong the pitiful scene?

'Some one go and lock the cottage door, and bring the key here,' the rector said to one of the servants. 'John shall not go back there.'

'My master,' he answered, 'I shall go home. It may be that my poor child will come home, and I should not like her to find the door shut if she comes.'

First of all, the rector went to the place where his son had formerly met the money-lender. There he learned that the same person had met Hubert by appointment the night before, and that there had been a stormy scene; that Hubert had called the man a cheat and scoundrel; that the man had said, 'I have you in black and white, and you cannot get over it;' and that, finally, Hubert changed a note for £50 at the bar, and had called a person in the room to witness a paper. From all this the unhappy parent gathered that his son had further involved the property bequeathed to him by his late aunt.

From there Mr. Clement went to the station, and learnt of the departure, by the midnight express, of Mr. Hubert and a lady closely wrapped up, that had been supposed to be Miss Rose.

The fugitives were traced to London. No further information could be gained. So the bowed man returned to the home made desolate and the hearts well-nigh broken, and waited for what should come next.

In the meanwhile the train had landed the missing ones at Euston Station. A cab is called, and they are whirled away. Ella is surprised and childishly delighted with the crowded streets and magnificent shops which

they pass on their way to the hotel at which he intends to stay for a few days.

'We shall be married this morning, Hubert?' she asks. 'It won't matter for this cotton dress. Which is the church?'

It is needless to say that there was no marriage. There were plenty of dresses, hats, and pretty things bought, but no golden wedding-ring. Under some pretext or other it was delayed, until, at length, Ella ceased to urge it. She grew white and thin—a shadow of her former pretty self. She sighed for her former happiness. The sight-seeing wearied her. The men and women Hubert introduced to her were loud and common, notwithstanding their fine dresses and elaborate jewellery.

'We shall have to go from these rooms to cheaper ones,' Hubert said to Ella one day.

'Very well,' she said, wearily.

'You will have to do with less, I can tell you,' he said, with a cold sneer.

'You can take all you have ever given me,' she cried. 'I never asked you to do but one thing, and that you have not done.'

'The old theme,' Hubert growled. 'I am sick of hearing you; and, upon my word, I shall soon be sick of you, for you do nothing but grumble.'

Ella had borne much, and, it would appear, had learned to retort, for now she answered:

'You can never be more tired of me, Hubert, than I am of myself and of all I see.'

'Including myself, I presume?'

‘You can put it so, if you like, Hubert. You have used me shamefully, and you know it.’

‘You were as ready to leave Rednall as I was to bring you, were you not?’

‘No, I was not! I was persuaded, and, like an idiot, I believed you would marry me the moment we reached London.’

He laughed loudly, and, crossing to where she sat, held her hands in his firm grasp, saying:

‘What a tempest in a teapot! Don’t be a goose. It is all right. Get your things together, and we will get away from here as soon as we can.’

‘Cannot you write to the man who lent you the last when we came away?’

‘I have written, and he will lend me no more; so what is left must be carefully used, Ella.’

A cheaper lodging is taken. Still the funds are getting lower. All Ella’s things are sold — dresses, watch, bracelets. Poverty stares them in the face. Their sin is finding them out!

‘I wish to heaven I had never seen your pale face,’ Hubert said, one morning. ‘You have been my ruin.’

She made no reply, for she was ill and sad. Just then her thoughts had wandered to the old place, and the old time, when she was innocent and pure, and bitter tears fell from her heavy eyes to the work she held in her hands.

‘Have you no answer, you idiot?’ he cried, fiercely, striding up to her, and seizing her roughly by her long hair.

‘Don’t!’ she said; ‘you hurt me, Hubert.’

‘This hair might fetch a trifle,’ he said, as the thought struck him. ‘Let me cut it off; shall I? It doesn’t matter for your looks now.’

The cold heartlessness of the request cut the girl to the heart, and she wept silently.

‘Will you sell it, or not?’ he said, sharply.

‘Not, Hubert. I will starve first.’

‘Starve, then,’ he said.

With an oath he flung the wretched girl from him. She tried to hold to his arm, when the coward struck her in her face. The blood spurted from her nose and mouth, and she fell to the floor. He gave her one look, and left the room. Just six months after he had brought her from her home, he left her—helpless, penniless, bleeding—alone in London! for he returned to the miserable Ella no more.



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SUICIDE.

Mad from life's history,  
Glad to death's mystery  
Swift to be hurled,  
Anywhere, anywhere,  
Out of the world !

Hood.

**I**N a small town in the West of England, one cold day in the autumn, large placards were to be seen on the walls, and any other available place, announcing the early arrival of a collection of wild animals. The placards further declared that Signor Huberto, the celebrated cornet-player, would delight the inhabitants of the town with his marvellous performances, in addition to the usual band, acknowledged to be the finest in England.

During the following night the heavy caravans and waggons that held the beasts, birds, and reptiles intended for exhibition were heard to pass over the stone-paved streets, and at times a low growl from one of the caged animals sounded strangely and dismally on the night air. A large and more lightly built van, dignified with the name of 'the house,' was at once the sitting and sleeping room of the men, for there were no women in the company. Such of them as were not

engaged with the horses harnessed to the waggons began to rouse themselves with the early morning. Over the door, that was in two divisions, the upper one being open, a man was leaning, not an old man, though his face was dull and heavy, despite his well-formed features. His hair was long and untidy ; no comb had passed through it, since he rose from his bed, nor had water touched his face. His eyes were wild and restless, and he gnawed his moustache with a certain snapping, spiteful manner. With one hand he tore at the finger-nails of the other ; there was blood on two of them, but he was apparently ignorant of the pain he was inflicting on himself. Conflicting emotions seemed to be passing through his mind ; for a moment a tear trembled in his eye ; the next he dashed it away with a low-breathed curse, muttering, 'I would to heaven I had never seen her. I wonder where the little fool is ; not that I need wonder, for I am sick to death of the thoughts of her pale face.'

This was the man called Signor Huberto, *alias* Jack the Bugler, but who really was Hubert Clement, son of the worthy but sorrowful rector of Rednall parish, who had so far fallen as to be at this time the associate and companion of the grooms and stablemen of a travelling menagerie. Truly the way of transgressors is hard.

It was the custom of the proprietor of the concern to send the men who composed the band in a gaudily painted car to perambulate the town, in order to give more publicity to the affair by their really good music ;

the man known as Signor Huberto, with his cornet, amongst them.

During one of these perambulations, when, as usual, there were crowds of people in the streets to see the car with its occupants and hear their music, a girl not more than nineteen years of age took her place amongst the men and women assembled together. She was dressed in shabby black silk, with a hat that seemed weather-beaten and faded. Her boots were worn down by long travel. Her face bore the remains of remarkable beauty—only the remains—for the girl was thin and careworn. Sorrow had printed its marks in every line and feature. A large quantity of fair hair fell in natural curls over the wasted shoulders.

‘Will the showmen—I mean, will the musicians be here soon?’ she asked of a man who stood next to her to hear the band as it passed.

‘No, not very long now,’ he replied; then added, ‘It is a capital band, and Signor Huberto sometimes gives a cornet solo about this place. Are you ill, Miss?’ he inquired, with feeling, for the girl gasped for breath, and became white as death.

‘No, not very, but I should be glad to get out of the crush and stand in the front if I can.’

At this moment the boom of the drum and the shrill sound of the brazen instruments fell upon the ear. In another instant the gaudy car with its occupants stopped just where the pale girl with the fair hair stood. The shrill music ceased, and Signor Huberto stood up to give the expected solo. All eyes were fixed on the performer. When the instrument

was silent, the Signor bowed his acknowledgments of the cheer that rose from the spectators, and was about to resume his seat, when the girl, her eyes wet with tears, an imploring look on her white face, and one hand slightly raised, took one step forward, hoping to attract the notice of Huberto. Their eyes met. A deep flush instantly covered his face, otherwise he was unmoved. His gaze was steadfast, hard, cruel. Instantly it changed to indifference, and the gaudy car passed on, music filling the air, as the girl fell on the stone pavement in a dead faint. Strangers held the insensible form and bathed the damp brow of Ella Carr, for it was that unhappy girl.

Thus it was that she, for the first time, met her infamous betrayer, after he had left her bleeding from the force of the blow, dealt by his coward hand, on the floor of a room in a London lodging-house two months before. This was the last time she ever saw him on earth.

A kindly-faced woman, who had knelt by the side of the hopeless Ella, now asked, 'Have you no friends here?'

'Not one,' said the girl. 'I will go away now, please.'

'Tell me one thing,' said the man who had just spoken to her. 'Is that man you were so anxious to see your husband?'

In a low, faint whisper, Ella answered, 'Alas! no.'

'Then may God help you, poor child.'

'I shall take her to my house,' said the woman who knelt beside her. With true womanly feeling, she

drew the dishonoured head of the girl to her bosom, saying, 'Come, come, I am very poor, but I can at least give you shelter.' With her own hands she removed the girl's hat, and took the worn boots from the swollen feet.

'Now,' she said, 'you must drink this tea. See, I am going to have some as well, and then you must tell me who you are. I may be the means of bringing you some help, if I can give you none myself.'

With many tears Ella gave all her history to her humble friend, who listened patiently with sympathy in her face.

'Now, if I could die out of all shame and misery,' cried poor lost Ella; 'die, and no one know anything further about me. O, let me die! let me die!'

'Hush, hush, child, you are not ready to die,' said this good Samaritan. 'You are not ready to die; and remember, that after death is the judgment.'

'Ah, no! I am not ready to die. Do you know, Ma'am, that I am the daughter of one of the best men that ever lived, and that every day of my life he prayed for me and with me: that I was a Sunday scholar; that I knew the Scriptures from childhood?'

'I supposed as much,' her friend answered, quietly; for she knew that was no time for reproach.

'Yes, that is all true, wretched girl that I am.'

'I will fetch a minister to see you, and advise with you.'

'No, please don't. I would rather not see any one. But if I could only see Hubert for an instant, and just tell him with my own lips that I forgive

him, I should be so glad. Then I will go away and hide myself from every one—my dear, dear father, Miss Rose, and all I used to love so much.’

‘Suppose, then,’ said the good woman, ‘you write a line or two, and I will get it to your—to Hubert, or whatever he is called, and ask him to come to see you.’

‘Do you think he will?’ Ella asked eagerly.

‘I don’t know that he will. I know that he ought. Try it.’

So, with many sighs and tears, Ella wrote :

‘HUBERT,—Will you come to me for one moment, only a moment? I want to look upon your face once more, and, with my own lips, tell you that I forgive you freely. Then you may go. I will never cross your path again. By the remembrance of early, happy times in Rednall, I entreat you to come to me. If you don’t, I shall die.

‘ELLA.’

The good woman found Hubert Clement easily, and waited while he read Ella’s note.

‘Let her die,’ he said, fiercely, as he tore the paper to shreds. ‘Tell her so; I want nothing to do with her. Tell her to go back to her sanctimonious old father, my hypocrite of a sister, or the humbug who calls me son.’

‘Will he come?’ Ella cried eagerly, as she met the mistress of the house on the threshold. ‘O, say: will he?’

‘He will not, my dear. Go in, and don’t trouble so. He is not worth a thought.’

'Will you tell me what he said?' she asked, faintly.

'He said you had better go back to your father,' said her friend, anxious at that moment to spare the wretched girl.

Her face, white before, became livid and drawn. She threw back the fair hair, and sat rigid and motionless for a little while, not shedding a tear.

'I am glad she takes it quietly,' said the good woman to herself, not knowing of the guilty resolve that was in Ella's mind that moment.

'You will now go to bed like a sensible girl, and not cry—will you? But kneel down and ask God to save you and befriend you.'

'I won't cry,' Ella answered. 'I will go to my room. And may I have a little water? I am thirsty.'

'Don't forget to ask God to have mercy on you.'

'I hope God will have mercy, since man has none,' the girl replied. But there was no tenderness in the voice, and a strange light was in her eyes that alarmed her hostess, who said,

'I shall come and see you in bed, I think.'

'No, thank you. I shall soon be at rest. Good night! God bless and reward you for your kindness to a poor outcast. Will you kiss me, please, before I go upstairs? And will you say one prayer for me, as soon as I am gone to bed?'

'Yes, yes, my dear. God bless you! Now good night. We will see what can be done to-morrow.'

When she reached her room, Ella placed the cup on a small table, the lamp by the side of it. Then she took from her pocket a small packet that held a whitish

powder. This she poured into the water with a trembling hand, and shook the vessel round and round until the white powder was dissolved. Then she set down the cup, and, clasping her hands above her head, cried aloud :

‘If there be mercy for the lost, Lord, pity me !’

This cry was heard by her hostess; as she passed her room ; and she went to bed contented, little dreaming of the awful tragedy then in progress.

Ella now took the cup in her fingers, and raised it to her ashy lips. When she set it down, it was empty ! The fatal draught had gone on its message of death.

An awful sense of her guilt before God now took possession of her, and she cried and prayed earnestly to be delivered from the consequences of her sin. Her agony at length became so great that her cries awoke her hostess, who hastened to the girl’s room. She was on her knees, doing battle with the King of Terrors. As the woman entered, Ella cried :

‘I am dying ! I have taken poison. I made up my mind to do it, if Hubert did not come to me. Is there mercy for me ? O ! is there ?’ she cried.

The terror-stricken woman flew for medical advice. When the doctor saw the writhing form and livid face, and took in his own the almost pulseless hand, he said :

‘There is more need of a clergyman than a doctor here. The poison has done its work. She will be dead in two hours !’

Why prolong the painful scene ?

Ella, the once pure, innocent Ella, the village beauty,



Rose Clement's favourite scholar, died by her own hand, yet bemoaning her sin in the sight of God, and her lost life. Surely the wages of sin is death. The wicked 'shall not live out half their days.' Ella was only nineteen when she went unsummoned into the presence of the God Who will not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance ; but Who is, nevertheless, abundant in mercy.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE PAUPER'S FUNERAL.

Dead, dead ! and who shall be found  
To lay the orphan under ground ?  
The parish attends to those things !

M. E. SABINE.

THERE is an inquest held on the remains of the unfortunate girl. On the evidence of those who were with her in her last moments, and especially that of Mrs. Hilton, the good soul who had taken her in, it is shown, that the fatal act was committed with forethought and deliberation. Mrs. Hilton had previously told of her visit to Signor Huberto on Ella's behalf, of his refusal to see her, and such other things as came under her notice, during the closing hours of the unhappy girl's life. This had led to the Signor's being summoned to be present at the inquest, where he was questioned at great length on his acquaintance with Ella. He was driven to acknowledge the shame he had brought on her young life, and that he had left her in poverty 'alone in London,' when he grew tired of her, and his money was done. Further, that he had known her perfectly well, when he saw her in the street, but had no desire to renew the intimacy ! He supposed she had gone back to her father long

before then, and had not the least idea that she ever entertained such a thought as that of committing suicide.

The coroner, who had listened to Hubert's replies with marked disapprobation, now commented strongly on his heartless conduct, and regretted his inability to punish him; 'For,' said he, 'I consider that this child's untimely end is owing to your base conduct. Go, Sir,' he added; 'I would that a whip could be placed in the hand of every man in the town, that you might be scourged through the streets.'

The verdict given was *Felo de se*.

'There is nothing else for it,' said the coroner, 'poor thing.'

Orders were given for the interment the next evening. Parish coffins are but poor things at best; but the thing brought for Ella was a poor apology for even those: four boards, rough and coarse; four pieces of rope, wherewith to lift the miserable shell; that was all; no name on the topmost board. Four men, clad in the grey shoddy worn by the paupers, cut out and made by a workhouse tailor, were the only attendants. As they placed the coffin on the shabby bier, a gentleman, who was passing, stopped to look on.

'May I not write the poor thing's name on her coffin lid?' he asked.

'No, no, Sir; it is not allowed,' one of the men returned.

'Only a pauper, whom nobody owns!'

The gentleman remarked, 'I wonder who she is!' and passed on.

The dreary spectacle moved on, followed by a large number of people, talking loudly, and in no gentle terms, of Huberto. All were still, as the coffin was in silence lowered into its narrow resting-place. No minister's voice uttered the words that have conveyed such comfort to many sad hearts: 'In sure and certain hope of the resurrection unto eternal life.'

Leaving Ella in her dishonoured grave, the mob—for it had now swelled to one—took their way to where the menagerie stood. The band was in full play; and, O, shame to human nature! Hubert was amongst them, drawing sweet sounds from his cornet! The moment he was seen, shouts of 'Murderer,' 'Coward,' 'Scoundrel,' were hurled at him. At first he took no notice. Presently, however, a well-dressed man sprang up the steps to the platform where the musicians sat, and demanded that he be dismissed from the company, and that he leave the town instantly.

'Are you a relative of the unfortunate girl?' the proprietor asked.

'I am not, I know nothing of her; but this man's presence is an insult to our mothers, our wives, and sisters. If you do not this instant dismiss him, he will be pulled down by the mob, and no one can answer for the consequences.'

Hubert's coward cheek blanched as he heard this, and he rose to his feet, facing his employer, who said:

'You had better go, Huberto, and you had better leave the place at once. You have brought this upon yourself.'

As he passed, the proprietor slipped some silver in his

hand, saying, 'There is more than is due to you; but you will need it. Now go.'

With a scowl on his face, he left the platform by a side door, and joined some of the men who were engaged in attending to the animals.

'All about a silly girl,' he cried, in a rage.

'A girl that you have killed,' said one: 'and if you want to get away with whole bones, you had better cut.'

'Don't speak to me. I am a gentleman, and you are a common cad,' Hubert cried, passionately.

The man drew a long whip—used to terrify the lions with—through his fingers, as he asked:

'What did you say? Say you were a gentleman? You? Do gentlemen bring innocent girls to ruin; and then murder them by their cruelty? I wonder, do gentlemen feel the cut of a whip like a cad does, now?'

'Hands off,' cried Hubert, in terror.

'Presently,' said the man; 'but I'll give you your deserts first,' and, with his strong right arm, he flogged him till he howled with pain, and fled from the place, followed by the yells of the people. Fear lent him wings, and he sped he knew not whither. He returned to the place no more. No tidings were ever brought thither concerning him.

It is not known, but it is hoped that Hubert Clement felt sorrow for the mischief he had wrought. If he did, he did not say so; and perhaps, in a nature so warped by selfishness as his had become, sorrow for others could find no resting-place, until brought to it by suffering. Hubert was at one time a free, open,

and generous lad, the pride of his father's heart, his sister's most cherished companion, a general favourite in the village. No entertainment was considered complete without 'Master Hubert's cornet,' on which instrument it has been seen he excelled. But the lad was drawn into evil company. Little by little he had given way, until he became one of those despicable beings who will sacrifice the dearest friend on earth, in order to gratify their own desires. Hubert gave up the God his father served, his mother had died rejoicing in. Is it any wonder, then, that God forsook him? The unhappy young man found for himself the full truth of the words spoken by God, through one of His prophets, to Eli, on the disobedience of his house: 'Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.' He knew it, and so will all those who forget God. 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' 'My son, walk thou not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path.'

## CHAPTER XXII.

### STRICKEN HEARTS.

How hardly man this lesson learns—  
To smile and bless the hand that spurns,  
To see the blow, to feel the pain,  
And render only love again!

EDMESTON.

TO go back to the night of Ella's death : she utterly refused to give any clue as to where her father would be found. 'It is better he should never know,' she said. She was equally reserved with regard to Hubert's friends.

In the pocket of the dress Ella had worn was found a letter that gave the information desired by the coroner, who was a humane man, and thought it right to acquaint the girl's friends with the nature of Ella's death and the circumstances attendant on it.

The letter was from John Carr, written in reply to one sent to him by his erring daughter, full of remorseful upbraidings of herself for her conduct, and begging for forgiveness. It finished with an earnest entreaty for 'one word in reply—one more "God bless you!"' 'Write at once,' the girl begged, 'for we leave this place in two days for the Continent.'

John had sent a letter—the one found. He begged

her to return, assuring her of full forgiveness. The letter, of course, bore the village post-mark, in addition to the old familiar address and signature of her father. It had been read and re-read, until it was worn quite into shreds, and was, perhaps, the only comfort the poor girl had known during the dreary months of her awakening from the glamour her sinful and misplaced affection for Hubert had cast about her.

Intimation of the melancholy affair was sent to the old man. When a letter, addressed by an unknown hand from a strange place, was given to him, his heart almost stood still with a strange and new terror. For some moments he feared to open it. The prompt, energetic man had of late become nervous and timid, and, though for months he had watched the coming of the letters to the Rectory, hoping there might be one for him, now that a letter had been received, he turned it helplessly round and round, as some of us, dear reader, have done, when we knew that the life of some dear one hung by a slender thread, and we feared to read the words, 'All is over.'

'Help, Lord,' he cried, as he broke the seal. When he had read to the end, he laid it down on the table, and pressed his forehead with both hands for some time, not uttering one word. His face was drawn, and his teeth were clenched. Then, rising from his seat, he cried :

'O, Ella, Ella ! my one dear lamb, my little child ! my dove, my darling ! thou hast indeed fallen into the hands of the vulture. But I will spoil his fine plumage ! I will draw those iron claws ! His face shall deceive



no more. He shall find there is strength in this old man yet. I will pursue him—mean coward that he has been and is—to the ends of the earth.’

Is this John Carr—this man with fierce passion on his face—this man vowing vengeance on another—this? Yes; Heaven help him! it is John Carr. His grief was more than he could bear; or, rather, let me say, more than he could bear just then; for, in the horror of the words he had read, John lost sight, for a few moments, of the place from whence his strength and help came.

It was a dreadful day for John when his beloved wife—with the tiny blossom that closed its sweet eyes on the world as soon as he beheld it on her arm—was laid in her grave. It was very sad when his curly-headed Willie sickened and died. But this—ah! this was infinitely worse.

‘Scoundrel—nay, murderer!’ he cried, ‘to steal my lily, crush all the loveliness out of her, and then leave her to her shame, to ruin—leave her to death, and, O! merciful Heaven, to ——’

John dared not let the word ‘judgment’ pass his lips. For a brief moment he stood aghast at the thought. Then he fell upon his knees, and cried aloud:

‘Lord! Lord! O, my child! my lost child!’

But there was no light; no comfort came to John in his agony.

‘What is it, Lord? Why can I not pray? Why do not I take hold of Thee for comfort? I am all in the dark. I grope like a blind man.’

John afterwards said that he seemed to see the face of his dying Lord, as He hung on the cross, and heard Him say, 'Except ye forgive men their sins, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your sins.'

The old man rose from his knees. Going out of the cottage, he put to the window-shutter; then, on re-entering the door, he bolted it securely, and went up to the room where Ella had always slept. He then knelt down by her bed in utter silence for a short time. Feeling, as he did, the cruel wrong done to his child, he thought he never could forgive Hubert Clement. The burden of his cry was, 'Lord, help me.' Until the day began to peep through the casement, he wrestled with the spirit of revenge that held him. At length he broke down, and, with a deep groan, cried:

'Lord, I'll try to forgive him.'

Poor John! There was a little more light now, and he found it easier to say:

'I will forgive him! But O, my poor Ella!'

Now the hitherto pent-up tears came to his relief, and he sobbed out his terrible woe on the bosom of his forgiving Lord.

As a more subdued feeling came to the bereaved father, he thought of another father whose sorrow he knew would be very great, and his beloved young mistress.

'I must go and tell them,' he said; 'and may the Lord give them grace to bear it!'

John only used a walking-stick when he went to his appointments. Other times it hung upon a nail in the wall. To-day he took it from its place; for his limbs

would scarcely bear him along, as he bent his steps towards the Rectory. As he passed the library window, he saw that it was open, and his master's voice bade him come to him. When he entered, he found Rose on her knees by her father's side. She had been weeping, and the Rector's face was stern and white.

'John,' he said, 'here is a letter from Hubert. He wants £20 by the next post. He says he is in danger, and that Ella is ill, and he wants to take her away at once. What can it be, John? Advise with me, my friend.'

'Send the money, master,' John replied. 'He is better away. Send, Sir; send at once. My poor Ella!'

'John, you know something that we do not. Speak! What is it? Tell me, I pray.'

'I will tell you nothing, Sir, till you have sent the money. If you won't send it, I have that much. He must go away. I am not sure of myself yet, master. I have never asked you to do an unreasonable thing. I beg you to send him what he asks for.'

'What do you mean?' cried the rector.

'I mean, Sir, that you will be glad to have sent that money when you know all I shall tell you.'

In a few minutes a £20 note was enclosed in an envelope and sent to the post office.

'Thank God!' John cried. 'Now he will be out of my sight, and I can forgive him easier than if I knew he was at all likely to come within my reach. Now, Sir,' he added, passing the coroner's letter to his master, 'please to read that. Miss Rose, too, Sir.'

Not a word was spoken, but the rector shook like a man stricken with palsy. Rose wept aloud.

'O, Ella; my dear little Ella! Cruel, wretched brother!'

'What can I say to you, my old friend?' said the Rector. 'I can give you no comfort; I can only weep with you. But for the coward who was once my son I will have no pity. Why did you persuade me to send him the money he begged for in his lying letter? I will never look upon his face again, and never forgive him this dastardly behaviour.'

'It was best to send him the money. I believe he will go away—for a time at least. When I am dead, I hope he will come back to you a better man, and you will forgive him, Sir.'

'Forgive him, John! Can you?'

'I had this letter last night,' John said, 'and I felt for a long time that I could not forgive; but I was obliged to do it—God made me.'

'Do you forgive?' the rector asked, in amazement.

'I do,' said the old man. 'I must. I spent the night in agony, because I could not; for my sweet child was constantly before me; but God helped me, and I do forgive him, and shall pray that he may have the mercy shown to him that he refused to my child. But I don't want to see him just yet, if at all. He has done the worst he can do to you, to Miss Rose, to me and mine. He has done badly to himself, and will surely suffer. But that's not our business, it is the Lord's.'

'Ah, John, true and faithful to Gospel teaching, you have the Spirit of Christ. I am the master, you the servant. We might well change places, for there is

a something in your life higher than has as yet entered mine.'

'You see, Sir,' the good old man answered, 'I have nothing but my Saviour left to me now. If I lose Him, what should I do? The sweet companionship of my Lord cheers under the darkest cloud, and, like the sun, it chases away the gloom of night. You are a learned man, Sir, and that is well, for I want to ask you one question,' said John, in great anxiety. 'Do you think there is any hope for my poor child's immortal soul?'

The rector bent his head for a moment. Presently he said :

'God's ways are not our ways, John. He has not revealed to us all that is in His great, loving heart. Ella was fearfully sinned against. God saw all the poor child's struggles, and He will not forget them. More than this we know not. Shall we not leave our dear Ella with Him? It was surely God who put it in your heart to forgive my wretched son. Was it not, John?'

'Yes,' taking in the rector's meaning, 'it was. I know it. Yes, Sir, I will leave my poor child with Him.'

And John, from that hour, felt better and fuller confidence in his Saviour than ever before, as a God of infinite wisdom and love.

'I shall take a few days, if you please, to see where my child is laid, Miss Rose.'

'We will go with you, John. Won't we, papa?' Rose said, with tender voice.

'Yes, John, we will go together,' said the rector.

The next morning saw the travellers on their way, and in the course of the next they wept together at the grave of Ella. Rose had brought some flowers from the Rectory garden in her satchel, and placed them on the bare soil over the poor girl's grave.

Mrs. Hilton, the good woman who had so befriended Ella, was sought, and liberally rewarded, ere they returned to Rednall.

'You must let me take Ella's place, dear John,' Rose said.

'And,' added the rector, 'come and live with us altogether. Will you? Do.'

'No, Sir; I shall like to keep my cottage, and come in and out of the garden when I like, and see you when I can. Miss Rose,' he continued, 'will come and see me, I am sure.'

'Indeed, indeed I will.'

'Thank you both. Now I will go home,' he continued; 'and what little time God may yet give me I will spend in His service, if He helps me.'

So John bade them good night, and entered the cottage-door, repeating the well-known lines:

God's purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour:  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

‘ HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.’

’Tis hard, when they in death are laid  
O’er whom we watched, and wept, and prayed,  
The parent, sister, wife, or son,  
To say, ‘ O Lord, Thy will be done.’  
And yet how light such sorrows be  
To His in dark Gethsemane,  
Who drank the cup with stifled groan,  
And said, ‘ O Lord, Thy will be done !’

JUDKINS.

**H**OME, home, without Ella! One of the servants from the Rectory had gone to the cottage, and, though the day was warm, had lighted the fire and spread the table with a few delicacies from the master’s table, when Rose had given her to understand that John would not remain with them. Her kindly heart also prompted her to stay till he entered, when she placed the teapot on the table, and, without mentioning Ella, bade him good night, and prayed God bless him. John responded ‘Amen,’ and returned her ‘Good night.’ A terrible sense of his loss came upon him, as he looked round the small room. Ah, the desolation of the hour! the agony of the father’s heart, as he felt the terrible past could never be remedied! never, never more! The bright head of his darling lay in a dis-

honoured grave, and he could do nothing but weep. Like David, he cried, 'Would to God I had died for thee, my child, my child!' Then, as if to accustom himself to the fact that he must henceforth be alone amongst the things and in the places in which they up to the last few months had mutual interest, he went from place to place, looking upon all she had been accustomed to see and care for; lastly, he went to her room. For a moment he stood irresolute, then slowly turned the handle of the door, and went in. It was to him like opening a grave. With trembling hands, he touched one after another the various articles laid about. There was the small glass that had so often reflected her fair face, the glass-covered work-box, another smaller one that held a tiny brooch, a pair of sleeve-links, her silver thimble, a bunch of dried flowers. On the table, a few simple books, and, as John discovered, her Bible amongst them. There was the little bed where he now remembered, some years since, he had knelt by Ella's side, she sobbing, as if her young heart would break, for the mother who lay dead in the next room, he striving to give the child the comfort he did not feel. And what wonder if he now thought how much better it would have been if she had sobbed her life away, and been laid by her young mother's side? What wonder, either, if, for a moment, his faith became clouded? That it was, might have been gathered from the anguished cry that burst from his white lips and was heard by the rector through the open casement, 'as he, with Rose, came up to the cottage. It was a great and exceeding bitter cry :



‘What shall I do? what shall I do? Father, take my hand! Abide with me!’ Thus the stricken man, down at the feet of his Lord, sought for the help and comfort that was mercifully given to him; his prayers being fervently joined in by the father and sister of the godless Hubert, from their position beneath the cottage window.

As John arose from his knees, with a new hope and trust, his master entered the cottage with the like blessing.

‘Come down, John, or shall I come to you?’ said Mr. Clement; and, suiting the action to the word, he went upstairs, to find him in Ella’s room. He slipped his arm through that of John, and led him from the place; then he turned back, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket. ‘Now, John,’ he said, ‘the worst is over. This home-coming is what we feared for you most. You have had some time alone; now we must bury our dead. It must be; you must live to serve and work for God. Rose and I have seen a very particular friend of yours—Harry Wild, who, with his widowed sister, will come and share your home, if you are willing. Yes? That’s right, either for a short time, or for good. They are good people, and love you. I believe you like them too. Have them for a little time? Yes, John, as you like. Harry can find plenty to do in the gardens under you. We can do with an additional man.’

So it was arranged, John’s friends came, and, but for the sad past, all would have been as before. But John himself, though his faith never failed, felt that

his bodily strength gave way daily; his step lost its firmness; almost unconsciously he began to use a staff when he walked. He took less interest in the gardens; not less in his Bible, or in the sweet long talks he had with Rose and his master. But he failed. At last, when autumn had stripped the trees of their leaves, and winter was coming with quick strides, John could not bear the cold. The frosts were sharp, and brought rapid decay to the enfeebled frame. Beautifully calm was the old man's countenance when told that death was not far off. 'How far?' he asked. 'A day or two at most,' he is told. 'It is well,' he said; 'dying is far easier than living. We don't know what there is before us in life. Many unseen sorrows are in the path of the living. There is not one in the path towards heaven. No, blessed be God, the way is bright and shining.

There is not a cloud that doth arise  
To hide my Saviour from my eyes.  
I soon shall mount the upper skies.  
All is well, all is well !'

'How little the world seems!' he said to his beloved master, just before he died. 'How small and mean, as I draw near to the holy place! How bright and glorious, how dear to my soul, is my Father's house above!'

'Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, the glory of that holy place, dear friend,' said his master. 'And O, John, you are close there.' This he said in deep sorrow; for already the dews of death were gathering thick upon John's brow, and he knew the time of parting had come.

John smiled, as he said, in a soft, low voice, 'It is well I am on the Rock!' Soon he fell into a troubled sleep and talked of 'that journey.' 'Forgive him,' he was heard to say. Then a low, pitiful wail of 'Ella, Ella!' burst from his lips, and death set its cold hand on the spring of life—it stopped. Yes, heart and pulse stood still, one quivering breath; and John Carr, gardener, Methodist local preacher and class-leader, had gone to be for ever with the Lord. 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'

John's friends—and they were many—followed him to the grave. Many tears were shed for him; 'For,' said the people, 'who will fill his place?' It was with extreme difficulty the rector was enabled to read the service, though in John's case there was sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life; but Richard Clement knew he had lost a faithful friend, as well as the best servant that ever master had.

In a few weeks a plain granite slab marked John's resting-place, bearing a suitable inscription, and the words: 'WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT.'

Does any young person read this story? Let them remember that John Carr did not die of old age, for he was only sixty, nor of fever, or apoplexy. The shock of his poor child's misconduct and its deeper consequences brought him so low that the sharp frost, which another time would not have touched him, brought him to the grave. It is said of Queen Mary that, when she was about to die, she told one of her attendants that the word 'CALAIS' might be found

written on her heart. If that figure might be applied to John Carr, then 'ELLA' might be found written there. Beware of the beginning of sin. Above all things, beware of having a *secret* from those whom God has placed over you. 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land.'

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE PRODIGAL.

Though the mills of God grind slowly,  
Yet they grind exceeding small ;  
Though, with patience, He stands waiting,  
With exactness grinds He all.

LONGFELLOW.

ONCE again we are at the Rectory. In the same room that we have from time to time seen, are seated the rector and his daughter. The sad trials of the past few months have told upon them both. The rector looks older, Rose more grave than before. They have been conversing together about the absent Hubert. In reply to something Rose has said, her father answers :

‘Without doubt, Rose, God can save all sorts and conditions of men, if they are willing ; but you know, my dear, we are free agents. The poet says truly,

Heaven wills our happiness, allows our doom :  
Invites us ardently, but not compels.  
Heaven but persuades, almighty man decrees—  
Man is the maker of immortal fates.

We must continue instant in prayer, and wait patiently. It may be that God will yet bring him to His feet.’

‘I remember, dear papa, one thing. John said to me, when we were speaking, as now, about Hubert: “We must wait, Miss Rose. God’s time is the right time. You see, we have to wait for all things. We plant and sow, and wait for the early and the latter rains. Then we wait for the blossom, and again we have to wait for the fruit. Even then we have to wait for it to ripen; for, if we gathered it before it was ripe, it would be good for nothing; instead of being fit for storing for winter, it would all decay. But if we leave it till the sun ripens it, you get the full benefit of it. There is nothing but waiting.”’

‘That is like John, dear old friend. How much I miss him!’ said the rector.

‘Letters, Sir,’ said a man who had taken John’s place in the rector’s service, but not, as John, in his esteem.

Rose took the bag and unlocked it, taking out several letters. One in a dirty envelope, with the stamp of several post towns, caught the rector’s eye. In a moment he knew the address to be in Hubert’s hand, though the letters were crooked and shaky. With trembling fingers he broke the seal, and cried,

‘O, Rose, my child! news of my poor lost boy once more!’

Throwing aside her own letters, Rose was in a moment at her father’s side. Taking the letter from his hands, she said:

‘Let me read it to you, father. There, rest your head on my shoulder—now, now.’

The letter began thus :

'FATHER—I dare not say "dear father," though you never were so dear to me as at this minute, when thousands of miles separate us. Father, I am dying. Long before this reaches you I shall be in the grave, and shall not know if you can do that which I am about to ask ; yet do it. Father, forgive me ! O, do. I would give the world, if I had it now, to hear you say, "Hubert, my son, I do forgive." I shall never know ; yet say it—say it aloud, often. And ask Rose—dear, sweet, good Rose—how I loved her till sin made a brute of me !—ask her to forgive me. And John ! tell him, if I could, I would crawl to his feet and beg his forgiveness. But I cannot ; tell him I am wretched, and miserable, and sinful, and I entreat his forgiveness for all the ruin I, in my miserable selfishness, brought on the once innocent Ella. I wonder can God forgive me, or not. I lie awake in the night, and think of that evening—you know when—and I wonder if there is mercy for such as I. I long for one sight of your face—one word of prayer with you in your study. But it can never be—never.

The grace of a day that is dead  
Can never come back to me.

\* \* \* \* \*

'I think I must have fallen asleep. I thought I saw John and Ella. She was very beautiful, and he did not look as though he could not forgive. I am——'

A stranger finished the letter. Hubert had fainted, and in a few hours died, and was laid by strangers in a foreign grave.

When the father and daughter were calm enough to converse, Rose said :

'How I wish dear John could have seen this, papa !'

'If we could have seen it together, dear, it would have been a great comfort. But John did forgive him, thank God. And so do I.'

‘And I, too,’ said the still weeping Rose.

‘It is well,’ the rector said. ‘God has had mercy, no doubt; for it was not the righteous, but sinners, Jesus came to save.’

‘Shall I put this in your desk, papa?’ Rose asked, holding in her hands the letter that had been read many times over.

‘Yes, dear, put it where I can often read it. I am truly thankful to God for it.’

Bessy Ratcliffe praised God with Rose for the brother’s letter.

‘God’s ways are best, Miss,’ she said. ‘Let us trust Him.’

This good old woman survived her friend John for some years, and then fell asleep in Jesus.

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A new curate had for some months been in Rednall. This gentleman was a sincere Christian, loving and serving God. He sincerely respected his superior; but he loved Rose—loved her for her piety, for her beautiful devotion to her father, and her many virtues. One day he told her so, and asked her to marry him, and Rose said, ‘Yes.’

The rector to this proposal gave his unqualified consent, and himself married his child to the man of her choice.

It was long before the mourning for John was over; longer before his place was filled in the small society that worshipped in the chapel in the lane;



for such thoroughly good men are rare. Yet the harvest is great. Pray ye that the Lord of the harvest send forth more labourers, and

That each from his Lord  
May receive the glad word,  
'Well and faithfully done!  
Enter into My joy, and sit down on My throne.'

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